



Evaluation of EU support to social protection in external action

2007-2013

Final Report
Volume I – Main Report
January 2018

Evaluation carried out on behalf of the European Commission

The evaluation was carried out by:
Landis MacKellar – Team Leader

Contributions from:

Ana Maria Femenia Garcia – Team Member

Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic – Team Member

Tino Smail – Team Member

Lena Zezulin – Team Member

Georg Ladj – Quality Control

Ana Vilar – Backstopping

Dominika Socha & Jana Bobokova – Evaluation
Managers

The evaluation is being implemented by Particip GmbH (leader) and AETS and managed by the DG NEAR A4 Multi-annual Financing Framework, programming and evaluation unit.

The author accepts sole responsibility for this report, drawn up on behalf of the Commission of the European Union. The report does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission.

Evaluation of EU support to social protection in external action 2007-2013 Final Report

The report consists of three volumes:

VOLUME I: MAIN REPORT

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Overall methodological approach**
- 3. Answers to the Evaluation Questions**
- 4. Conclusions**
- 5. Recommendations**

VOLUME II – EVIDENCE MATRIX WITH FIELD PHASE ANALYSIS – COUNTRY REPORTS

- 1. Synthesis Note presenting findings and conclusions of the field Country Reports**
- 2. Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- 3. El Salvador**
- 4. Ethiopia**
- 5. former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**
- 6. Kyrgyzstan**
- 7. Malawi**
- 8. Moldova**
- 9. Montenegro**
- 10. Morocco**
- 11. Palestine**
- 12. Turkey**

VOLUME III – CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY – ELECTRONIC DATA

- 1. Terms of Reference**
- 2. List of documents consulted**
- 3. List of people interviewed**
- 4. Overview of EU-funded key interventions**
- 5. Survey results**

Table of contents

List of acronyms and abbreviations	iii
Executive Summary	v
1 Introduction	13
1.1 Mandate and scope of the evaluation	13
1.2 Structure of the report	14
2 Overall methodological approach	15
2.1 Steps for data collection and analysis	16
2.2 Challenges and limitations	18
3 Answers to the Evaluation Questions	19
3.1 EQ 1: Relevance	19
3.2 EQ 2: Basic social protection	29
3.3 EQ 3: European approaches and policy dialogues	38
3.4 EQ 4: Social partners and civil society	42
3.5 EQ 5: Social protection systems.....	48
3.6 EQ 6: Social exclusion – impact	56
3.7 EQ 7: Modalities – strategic approach.....	60
3.8 EQ 8: Coherence, added value	68
4 Conclusions	73
4.1 Cluster 1: Policy framework and strategic focus.....	73
4.2 Cluster 2: Effects of EU support.....	74
4.3 Cluster 3: EU institutional environment and implementation approaches	75
5 Recommendations	77
5.1 Cluster 1: Policy framework and strategic focus.....	79
5.2 Cluster 2: EU support, institutional environment, and implementation approaches	82

List of boxes

Box 1	EUD's survey response rate	17
Box 2	Social protection under IPA	23

List of figures

Figure 1	Thematic scope of the evaluation	14
Figure 2	Key steps of the evaluation process	15
Figure 3	Levels of analysis and data collection tools	16
Figure 4	Stakeholders coverage	17
Figure 5	Evolution of the overall EU policy framework and major changes in the international context during the period 2005-2016	21
Figure 6	Extent to which special needs of the informal sector, of agricultural workers and of children have been addressed by EU support between 2007 and 2013	32
Figure 7	Between 2007 and 2013, sector policy dialogues in which SP has been mainstreamed between 2007 and 2013.....	44
Figure 8	Extent to which the EU has advocated for the involvement of social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and other stakeholders in reforms in SP between 2007 and 2013.....	46
Figure 9	Extent to which the EU support has contributed to improvements in the various areas of SP between 2007 and 2013.....	57
Figure 10	Main channels of delivery for EU support to SP between 2007 and 2013	63
Figure 11	Ownership of national stakeholders in SP at the beginning (2007), at the end (2013) of the period under evaluation, and in 2016, rated by the EUDs	65
Figure 12	EUD participation in the donor working groups between 2007 and 2013.....	70
Figure 13	EU participation in or management of joined-up approaches between 2007 and 2013.....	71

Figure 14	Major links between EQs, conclusions and recommendations.....	78
Figure 15	Prioritisation of recommendations, schematic overview	79

List of tables

Table 1	Field study countries	17
Table 2	Overview of EU multi-country studies on SP	27
Table 3	Overview of the main recommendations.....	78

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ASPIRE	World Bank's Atlas of Social Protection
ASW	Agency of Social Welfare
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CGP	Child Grant Programme
CRIS	Common External Relations Information System
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
CTP	Cash Transfer Programme
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DCT	Donor Coordination Team
DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DFID	Department for International Development
DG	Directorate General
DPCC	Donor Party Coordination Committee
DWG	Donor Working Group
EAMR	External Assistance Management Report
EC	European Commission
ECFIN	Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs
ECHO	Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EPSCO	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
EQ	Evaluation Question
ESC	Economic and Social Council
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUREP	Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)
FSP	Food Security Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HQ	Headquarters
HRD	Human Resource Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISG	Inter-service Steering Group
ISPA	Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments
ISSA	International Social Security Association

JC	Judgement Criterion
JCC	Joint Coordination Committee
JP	Joint Programming
JRIS	Joint Review and Implementation Support
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean Foundation
MBLIF	Monthly Social Benefit for Low Income Families
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)
MoLSD	Ministry of Labour and Social Development
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MS	Member State
MSB	Monthly Social Benefit
NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSIH	National Social Insurance House
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PAIRCA	Programme to Support Central American Regional Integration
PBS	Protection of Basic Services
PCS	Comunidades Solidarias programme
PFM	Public Finance Management
POVNET	OECD DAC Network on Poverty Reduction
PRBS	Poverty Reduction Budget Support programme(in Lesotho)
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
ROM	Results Oriented Monitoring
SANTE	Directorate General for Health and Food Safety
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOCIEUX	Social Protection European Union Expertise in Development Cooperation
SP	Social Protection
SPF	Social Protection Floor
SPIS	Social Protection and Inclusion System
SPS	Social Protection System
SPSP	Sector Policy Support Programme
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The evaluation's purpose, scope and background

The evaluation has three objectives:

- Provide an assessment on the attained results, their impact and sustainability, the good practices and pitfalls in Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance I (IPA I), European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and European Development Fund (EDF) programming and implementation.
- Assess the Intervention logic of IPA II, ENI, DCI (2014-2020) and 11th EDF planning documents addressing social protection, in order to assess their coherence with the relevant policy frameworks and programming guidelines. In particular, the evaluation assesses how the planning documents take on board past lessons, have moved towards Sector Approach and Sector Budget Support and to which extent they have established clear objectives, targets, indicators, baselines and monitoring mechanisms.
- Where possible, analyse current (i.e., post-2013) social protection programmes/projects to assess how well they reflect new approaches at this early stage of their implementation.

The evaluation has a strategic focus and assesses to what extent the EU support to social protection contributed to achieving the objectives of EU cooperation in the area of social protection. The assessment identifies key lessons and best practices, and produces recommendations in order to improve the current and future EU strategies, policies and actions. The evaluation covers the period 2007-2013. The geographical scope includes all third regions and countries under the mandate of the EU Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and of the EU Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) that are covered by the IPA (including Croatia but excluding Iceland), ENPI/ENI (except Syria and Libya), DCI and EDF.

The thematic scope of the evaluation was on the social insurance and social assistance measures to address the following risks and

needs: unemployment, parental responsibilities, sickness and healthcare, work accidents/employment injuries, disability, loss of a spouse or parent, old age, and social exclusion.

Methodology

The evaluation is based on DG NEAR guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring, and evaluation. It was conducted in four main phases: inception, desk, field, and synthesis. The evaluation was managed by the DG NEAR A4 MFF, Programming and Evaluation Unit, incorporating all relevant EU services in an Inter-service Steering Group (ISG) responsible for overseeing the process. The design chosen for the evaluation was a multiple case study design, based on the use of a mixed-methods approach. Eight Evaluation Questions (EQs) were formulated following a structured process based on an analysis of the EU policy framework and reconstruction of the EU's intended intervention logic related to social protection. Evaluation Questions, Judgement Criteria (JCs) and Indicators were defined to guide data collection and analysis. To achieve a reasonable balance between accumulating a rich evidence base and keeping the study to feasible proportions, it was decided (in consultation with the ISG) to focus on a sample of 14 cases during the desk phase. 11 countries were selected for field visits. The evaluation used a combination of tools and techniques for primary and secondary data collection, such as online surveys to 33 EU Delegations, analysis of all Regional and Country Strategy Papers to identify focal areas of support and an in-depth analysis for a selection of 36 Country Strategy Papers, literature review, meta-analysis of evaluations/audits, and interviews with stakeholders (around 320 persons were interviewed).

The evaluation was implemented between April 2016 and February 2018.

Overall assessment of EU support to social protection

Social protection (SP), as the EU has recognized in its Communication (2012) 446: Social Protection in European Union External Support, is a human right. It is conventionally divided into two spheres, social insurance, usually based contributions associated with

formal employment, and social assistance, non-contributory schemes available to all. Social insurance allows persons to manage risks that are broadly perceived to be social in nature – unemployment, disability, sickness, etc. Social assistance ensures that every person will have a basic minimum income and will have access to basic health care and basic social services. Taken together, social insurance and social assistance are important to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that are central to the EU's external support. Social insurance promotes risk-taking, hence growth, and reduces inequality. Social assistance is a necessary tool to prevent social exclusion.

Europe has long been seen as a leader and a model for all forms of SP. Not surprising, then, this evaluation has found that the EU has supported SP in many forms – programmes to fight social exclusion at the local level in the Western Balkans, cash transfer social assistance programmes in Africa, the European Neighbourhood, and Latin America; social protection system reform in Latin America and the Neighbourhood East. Yet, with limited financial resources and staff constraints at HQ and in the EUDs, the EU is not broadly regarded as a major player in international promotion of SP.

The EU support to SP has contributed to alleviating poverty as well as to the broader EU agenda – human rights including gender and promoting European values and interests. But, if the EU wants to realise the potential of support for SP, it is going to have to engage in a consequential internal debate about the resources that it plans to devote to the area. Overall, EU support to SP has not built on a broad strategic view on how to integrate SP into its external support, one that spans social assistance and social insurance recognizing that they are complementary and that each fills a necessary role. To date, the EU has concentrated very largely on social assistance; a decision consistent with its focus on poverty reduction. At the same time, a longer-term perspective would be required that foresees a time when economic growth and formalization will have stimulated the demand for social insurance. The evaluation team has found that there is relatively little coordination or cooperation between the EU and the major global SP organisations, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and

selected UN agencies such as UNICEF. Historically, the first two institutions took ideologically opposing views of SP, but that tension is now significantly reduced. If the EU wishes to become a global player in SP, it would do well to work with those players already on the field.

Member States also have a role to play. SP is a highly technical field, meaning that there is a body of specialized knowledge of what has worked well, what has not, why, and on the pros and cons of various approaches. A large share of that global expertise is European. Through twinning and other approaches, the EU is uniquely placed to make that expertise available to partner countries and, in so doing, to promote European values.

Main conclusions

Cluster 1 – Policy framework and strategic focus

Conclusion 1: EU support to social protection has concentrated very largely on social assistance and social inclusion. This is consistent with the EU's focus on poverty and vulnerable / marginalized populations. The EU has mostly steered clear of supporting the reform of weak or failing social insurance systems.

In some countries, the EU contributed to comprehensive reviews of SP schemes at the country level, which helped to better identify challenges related to harmonisation. However, such analyses were not systematically carried out and the strategic focus of EU support corresponded to an explicit division of labour in only a few countries.

Conclusion 2: Prior to 2012, the EU did not have a policy to guide social protection in its external assistance, although this did not prevent it from pursuing the poverty alleviation and social inclusion agenda. In fact, the putting in place of an explicit strategy in 2012 does not appear to have greatly affected the EU's scope of interventions.

The evaluation has found a considerable degree of continuity in the nature of support to social protection during the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework and the 2014-2020 period. The analysis of SP found in the 2012

Communication 446 on Social Protection in EU External Support and in policy documents prepared at EU headquarters has placed social assistance and social inclusion in a broader context but has not led to any fundamental changes in direction or scope. EU support to social protection in all programmes evaluated has aligned to government priorities. Many of the greatest challenges to social protection, as well as many of the most innovative approaches, are in Upper Middle Income Countries. EU SP strategy has not been greatly evident in these countries, nor have opportunities for knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchanges been fully exploited, with some exceptions.

Conclusion 3: Social protection has remained a relatively minor part of the EU's cooperation portfolio. In line with partner country priorities, it has only rarely been a focal sector. There has been some effort to link social protection interventions to other interventions (e.g. humanitarian assistance, food security), with mixed results.

In only a few countries has social protection been a focal sector. This has limited opportunities for budget support operations. In some cases (mostly DCI/EDF countries), social protection actions were embedded in broader strategies; however, they have rarely been integrated into the sort of broad strategic approach that would be consistent with the 2012 Communication. In the Western Balkans, EU financial assistance focussed on local projects with very specific social inclusion themes. This is consistent with the EU emphasis on decentralization and support for Local Authorities. At the same time, policy dialogue in the context of accession negotiations addressed challenges related to social protection in areas such as labour law, inclusion, and social policy. There have been attempts to link social protection to humanitarian assistance (e.g., ECHO interventions). While there have been specific success stories, a broad strategic linking-up of social protection with humanitarian aid remains elusive.

Conclusion 4: EU support to social protection has been coherent with the European values and the EU's dedication to a human rights-based approach to development, but there has been insufficient gender mainstreaming.

The European Social Model regards social protection as a human right, a view embodied in the EU's 2012 Communication 446 on Social Protection in EU External Support. Specific aspects include the right to a basic minimum income sufficient to allow a household to live in dignity, the right to access to basic health care, the right of those in need to basic social services, and the right to be free from discrimination and social exclusion. This evaluation has found that EU cooperation in social protection has covered all three of these areas, consistent with partner country priorities. In line with partner country needs, not all areas have been covered in all countries. Gender aspects have been reflected in all EU social protection external support reviewed, however, there is no evidence that gender aspects have been mainstreamed in SP.

Cluster 2 – Effects of EU support

Conclusion 5: EU actions have contributed to tangible progress in the fight against social exclusion and alleviation of poverty but country-level effectiveness has not been at the level of social protection as a broad system, rather at the level of components of a comprehensive SP system.

EU actions in social protection reviewed have been moderately effective. In the Western Balkans, socially excluded populations have gained greater access to basic social services and the quality of such services has improved. Especially in the area of children and the disabled, there was progress on policy reform and de-institutionalisation in a number of IPA, ENI and DCI countries. EU-supported cash transfer programmes in the examined DCI, EDF, and ENI countries have produced tangible results in enhancing income security and thus alleviating poverty, as attested to by rigorous impact assessments. They have ensured access to basic human needs, thus have promoted social inclusion and reduced inequality. That said, benefits are too low to actually lift households out of poverty; they alleviate poverty but do not reduce its incidence. The main value added of these programmes has been the regularity and predictability of benefits, not their size. Moreover, EU impacts have been mostly at the level of components of the broad SP system, not at the level of the system itself.

Conclusion 6: The sustainability of many effects/benefits achieved remains fragile. Ministries responsible for social protection are short of resources, even as the demand for social protection rises.

With EU support, some countries reviewed in this evaluation have put in place national social protection policies that have been widely praised: El Salvador, Palestine* and Ethiopia. Yet implementation of these ambitious plans lags behind policy formulation. Ministries responsible for social protection must compete with other ministries that have historically had a stronger claim on resources. While the constraints are ultimately fiscal, proximate constraints on policy implementation are often related to basic capacity issues – a need for more social workers at decentralised level, more vehicles and petrol to effect household visits, etc. The EU has contributed to sustainability by providing technical assistance (TA) aimed at analysing future resource needs. At the same time, sustainability in many countries would be enhanced by more thoroughly analysing future resource needs, and by better involvement of civil society, social partners, the private sector, and Parliaments.

Cluster 3 – EU institutional environment and implementation approaches

Conclusion 7: Due to staff capacity constraints in all three DGs directly involved in social protection (DEVCO, NEAR, and EMPL), the EU has not fulfilled its potential to contribute to major international policy debates on SP. Contributing to insufficient visibility in international policy dialogue is the weak coordination on SP between relevant EC services, EEAS, and EU Member States.

International policy debate on social protection continues to be dominated by the World Bank, the ILO, UNICEF, and a scattering of other institutions including some bilateral donors. While the EU participates in important policy groups such as SPIAC-B, it is not perceived by other players as doing so as effectively as it could or should. Some reasons for this are due to governance of the relevant fora; others to

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

factors internal to the EU including staff capacity constraints and weak coordination between the major actors, including EU Member States.

Conclusion 8: The quality of policy dialogue at country level has been variable.

Technical expertise is in short supply in EU Delegations (EUD) and the quality of policy dialogue is dependent on the level of interest of the personality who is assigned the dossier, who will typically be handling a number of areas. In some countries reviewed, the EUD's level of interest in the subject has been high and there has been good policy dialogue in the area. Where there has been long engagement and the EU is seen as a neutral external partner, it has been possible for the EU to facilitate dialogue between national partners responsible for SP. The EU has also played a valuable role in donor coordination in countries where a substantial number of EU Member States are active in SP. The EU has supported the implementation of large analytical studies in the past, which have received some attention, especially among EU actors. But the EU has not positioned itself as a key supporter of analytical work in the area of social protection (which would have enhanced its visibility). The quality of analytical technical assistance provided by the EU has, however, been high. See *Conclusion 3 for policy dialogue in the Western Balkans*.

Conclusion 9: Implementation modalities have been used in a reasonably effective and efficient way. In particular, the use of budget support has contributed to policy reforms while supporting the implementation of specific social protection schemes with a range of partners, e.g. NGOs and UN agencies. However, a number of strategic gaps and missed opportunities have been identified.

The interventions studied have been implemented using a range of modalities, and all have been reasonably effective and efficient. The project modality has been usefully applied to fighting social exclusion and has been successful in building capacity of CSOs and local authorities. Budget support has resulted in institutional re-organisation, capacity building, and improved policies. At the same time, a number of strategic gaps have been identified – for example, unavailability of budget support in under IPA I, leading to small, scattered projects

(a problem being addressed by the sector approach in IPA II); insufficient deployment of EU Member States' expertise in the form of twinning and SOCIEUX, and insufficient attention to SP in global thematic programmes and regional programmes. A range of implementation channels was used. In one instance (Malawi), the EU resorted to delegated cooperation because the concerned Member State had long experience in the country. In Palestine, direct financial support through the PEGASE programme was a logical source of funds for social protection because of the EU's broad commitment to serving as a financial lifeline to the Palestinian Authority.

Conclusion 10: While there has been complementarity between the instruments used by the EU to support social protection and the EU has made efforts to link social protection interventions to other interventions (e.g. humanitarian assistance, food security), the level of synergy achieved has remained limited. Moreover, the use of global thematic programmes to support SP has been limited.

Global programmes such as the Social Protection European Union Expertise in Development Cooperation (SOCIEUX) were little used in the countries reviewed. SOCIEUX is essentially demand-driven, suggesting that policy dialogue failed to advocate effectively for greater use of EU Member States technical expertise in SP. The EU Social Protection Support programme (EU-SPS) is still too recent to observe important results. Despite some evidence of social protection-related projects under EIDHR and other thematic budget lines, there has been little or no systematic linkage between SP interventions and projects financed under thematic programmes. There have been scattered linkages between SP, health, migration, refugees and gender, but no organised efforts to link SP with, e.g., climate change via the resilience agenda. Except when there was budget support, there has also been little linkage between social protection interventions and EU support to policy reform provided in areas such as public finance management (PFM). As mentioned above, there have been some success stories in linking cash transfer programmes to humanitarian assistance.

Conclusion 11: At project level, the EU has established sound monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and learning mechanisms, but some interventions lacked a result focus and there were mixed results in strengthening national M&E and statistical capacities. At global level, monitoring and learning were hindered by limited EU institutional knowledge of its support to SP and the low profile of SP in EU bilateral and global strategic cooperation frameworks.

EU-funded interventions generally relied on sound M&E, with embedded technical assistance often helping to enhance monitoring mechanisms and learning loops, despite a weak result focus in some instances. At a more global level, the EU institutional perspective on support to SP has been weak as illustrated by the absence of a clear overview of the EU portfolio in this area and limited examples of cross-fertilisation between experiences from different countries/regions. Recent initiatives such as the publication of EU reference documents on SP (e.g. the 2017 DEVCO Concept Paper No. 5 on the measurement of SP) are useful elements to improve the overall monitoring of EU support to SP at a technical level. However, their impact on adopting a more strategic institutional perspective on SP across EU institutions is likely to remain limited if resources mobilised and the profile of SP in bilateral and global strategic cooperation frameworks stay as they are.

Main recommendations

Cluster 1 – Policy framework and strategic focus

Recommendation 1: The EU should continue to focus its social protection support on social assistance and social inclusion and at the same time promote – whenever possible – a broad, reasoned, and sequenced strategic approach with due attention to sustainability, including social insurance schemes.

The EU should continue to focus its social protection support on social assistance and social inclusion. At the same time, it should step up efforts to promote a broad strategic approach which stresses the relationship between the programmes it supports and social protection as a whole, including social insurance schemes.

The range of SP concerns addressed by the EU at country level has been narrower than a reading of Concept Paper No. 4 on supporting social protection systems would suggest is required. Reasons for selecting particular areas for action should be made clear and overall sector concerns such as sustainability of the SP policy framework as a whole should be better addressed (see also Recommendation 6). When SP reforms are linked to a particular sector (e.g., health), the link between SP aspects and broader sector reform should be identified and taken into account. Sequencing, sustainability, and coherence of the overall SP policy framework should be better taken into account. Opportunities for closer cooperation with the ILO and World Bank should be identified and pursued when possible. In DCI/EDF countries, EU's focus on social assistance and social inclusion should foresee a universal and longer term perspective strengthening social protection systems whenever possible. In many ENI countries, which inherited from the socialist era functioning social insurance systems that have become impaired by structural flaws and economic crisis, provision of EU social insurance expertise could add value. In IPA beneficiaries, increased use of twinning and the promotion of partnerships with EU Member States institutions in the context of both IPA financial support and through policy dialogue in closely related areas such as labour codes could strengthen EU support to bring social insurance systems in line with European good practice. Throughout the EU's SP programmes, there is need for better mainstreaming of gender and the application of European gender expertise.

Recommendation 2: The EU should further develop the social protection support in post-conflict and fragile states, humanitarian emergencies, and refugee situations.

In line with the stated goal of better differentiation, the EU should continue to work on developing approaches to social protection that are appropriate in post-conflict and fragile states, including the better integration of social protection and humanitarian assistance.

Recommendation 3: The EU should consider scaling up its support to social protection.

If the EU wishes to make a serious impact in the SP area, it will need to consider larger programmes, probably in the form of budget

support or programmes supporting sector-wide approaches, and more actively advocate for increased fiscal space for SP at the national level. If it does not scale up resources devoted and systematize its support in the area, there is a danger that its portfolio will consist of scattered actions which have an immediate impact, but fail to achieve institutional stability and fail after international donor support is withdrawn.

Cluster 2 – EU support, institutional environment, and implementation approaches

Recommendation 4: The EU should increase its visibility in international cooperation on social protection.

If the EU wishes to make a serious impact in international SP discussions, it will require higher visibility. This could be achieved by increasing its contribution to international policy dialogue on social protection, building on its comparative expertise in social assistance, social inclusion, and humanitarian assistance. EU external visibility requires that it leverages its presence by structured consultation and coordination during programming and implementation among EC services, EEAS and EU Member States.

Recommendation 5: The EU should better use thematic budget lines (human development, food security, migration, etc.) and regional programmes to complement bilateral geographic cooperation.

The EU should take better advantage of thematic (in addition to SOCIEUX and EU-SPS) and regional programmes to promote knowledge sharing and regional peer-to-peer exchanges. Social protection has a pronounced regional character, with shared demographic and economic challenges, shared approaches to SP inherited from the past, and shared needs for reform. As SP is a technical field, the sharing of experiences and policy responses can play a crucial role.

Recommendation 6: The EU should increase attention to sustainability in social protection support.

In all social protection actions, greater emphasis should be given to early and continuing dialogue with partner governments on the transition to national financing (see also Recommendation 1).

TA related to fiscal sustainability should be provided from the programming stage forward. Moreover, social assistance schemes supported by the EU should contain elements related to economic empowerment with the goal of eventually moving recipients into decent work, thus relieving budgetary pressure on the scheme. On the social insurance front, including regarding social protection from a system-wide perspective, the EU needs to be in closer contact with the private sector.

Recommendation 7: The EU should better explore the potential of the Partnership Instrument to address social protection weaknesses in Upper Middle Income Countries and promote triangular cooperation.

Looked at in sheer numbers of the poor, there is more poverty in Middle Income Countries than in Low Income ones. In many Upper Middle Income Countries, social protection systems are seriously deficient. Other countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, have been the source of some of the most innovative and widely copied social assistance schemes. As the EU tries to better address cooperation with graduated countries in the new multi-financial framework (MFF) using the Partnership Instrument (PI), it should consider social protection as a Partnership Instrument focal area, including promoting triangular cooperation.

Recommendation 8: The EU should mobilise adequate resources at country level to accompany social protection reforms on a continuous basis and understand well the political dimension of such reform processes.

Countries where the EU has added substantial value in SP have been those in which there was continued, long-term policy dialogue at country level. Under such circumstances, the EU has been perceived as a neutral external partner facilitating the dialogue between national institutions involved in SP reform. Therefore, the EU should mobilise adequate resources for its structures at country level to accompany SP reforms.

Recommendation 9: The EU should increase efforts to support the development of monitoring and evaluation systems tailored to the national context and institutions, with greater emphasis on understanding barriers

to the effective implementation of SP schemes.

M&E systems need to be adjusted to reflect institutional realities in SP. Standard western SP models may not be suitable for achieving institutional ownership and buy-in. Moreover, M&E has been heavily oriented towards the development of sophisticated databases, resulting in a bias towards detailed quantitative data. The EU should work with national partners to support them in developing national M&E systems appropriate to their context and institutions, and continue increasing the attention given in M&E activities to assessing performance from an outcome rather than a process perspective. This requires not only assessing quantitative indicators, but carrying out in-depth qualitative analyses to understand beneficiaries' perceptions and attitudes towards SP schemes.

1 Introduction

1.1 Mandate and scope of the evaluation

A broad evaluation covering a seven-year period of EU support in third countries, regions and through relevant instruments.

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the performance of European Union (EU) support provided in external action for social protection (SP) during the period 2007-2013. According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) the evaluation has the following objectives:

- Provide an assessment on the attained results, their impact and sustainability, the good practices and pitfalls in Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance I (IPA I), European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and European Development Fund (EDF) programming and implementation.
- Assess the Intervention logic of IPA II, ENI, DCI (2014-2020) and 11th EDF planning documents addressing SP, in order to assess their coherence with the relevant policy frameworks and programming guidelines. In particular, the evaluation assesses how the planning documents take on board past lessons, have moved towards Sector Approach and Sector Budget Support and to which extent they have established clear objectives, targets, indicators, baselines and monitoring mechanisms. The evaluation has a strategic focus and assesses to what extent the EU support to SP contributed to achieving the objectives of EU cooperation in the area of SP.
- Where possible, it analyses current (i.e., post-2013) SP programmes/projects to assess how well they reflect new approaches at this early stage of their implementation.

Lessons learned and recommendations are based on an assessment of factors that hampered and those that helped the effectiveness of EU support in the past, including cross-fertilisation between IPA I, ENI, DCI and EDF experiences.

The evaluation includes an *assessment of*:

- Relevance and coherence of EU's SP cooperation strategy and programmes;
- Impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of EU support to SP.
- Value added of EU's interventions in support of SP, both at strategic and implementation levels.
- Coordination and complementarity of the EU's interventions in support of SP with other donors' interventions, especially those of the EU MSs.
- Coherence between EU's interventions in support of SP and other policies that are likely to affect partner countries and regions.

The assessment also integrates the aspects of relevance and coherence of the different aid delivery methods, instruments and channels employed at the bilateral and regional level.

The *geographical coverage* of the evaluation includes:

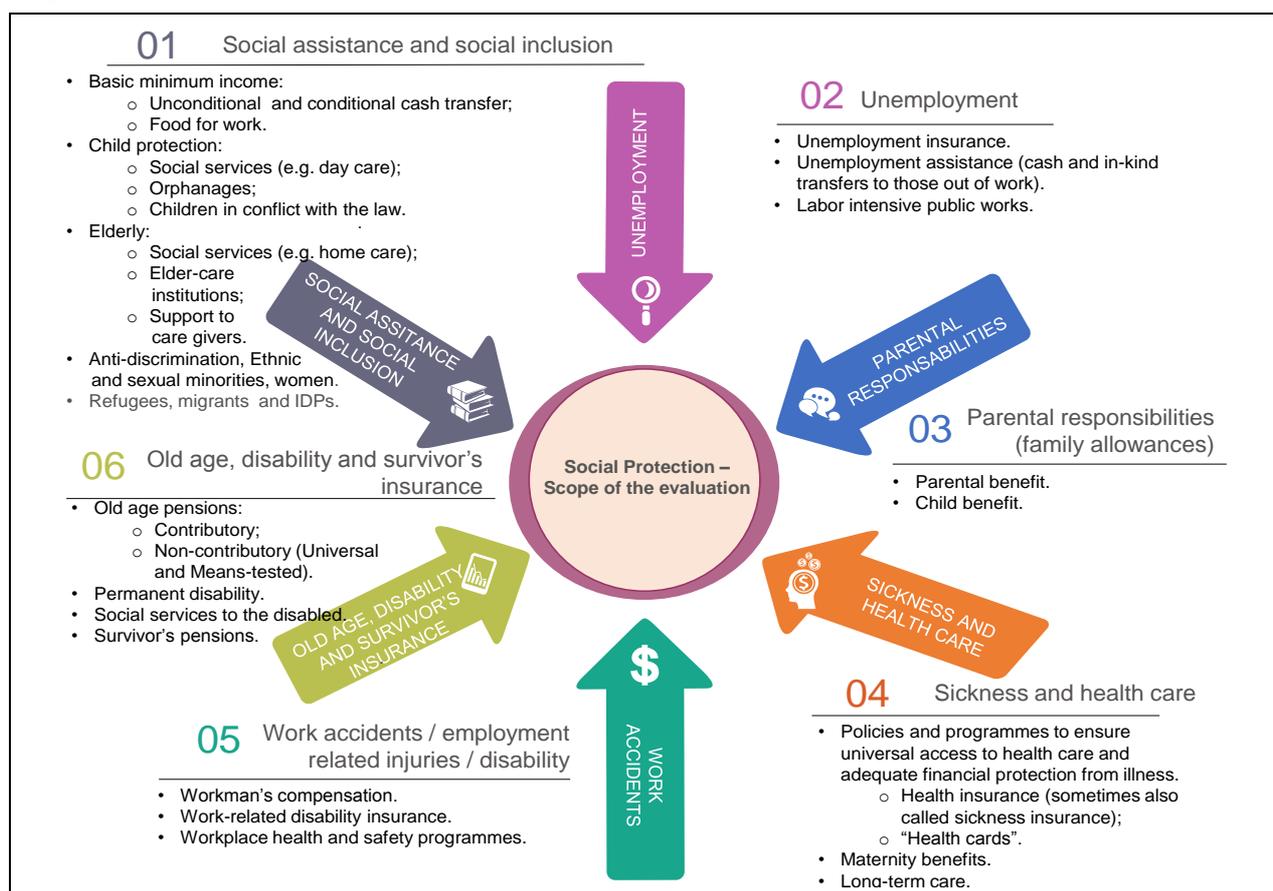
- All IPA I beneficiaries (including Croatia but excluding Iceland).
- All ENPI partner countries except Syria and Libya¹.
- Several countries covered by DCI and EDF, namely Angola, China, EI

¹ These countries were not taken into account in the sample because of the prevailing political situation.

Salvador, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Malawi, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Togo and Yemen².

Figure 1 depicts the *thematic coverage* of the evaluation and underpins its broad scope

Figure 1 Thematic scope of the evaluation



Source Particip GmbH analysis

Excluded from the thematic scope, if they represent the core objective of a programme, are training and retraining (specifically excluded by ToR), employment creation schemes, e.g. employer subsidies (these have more to do with active labour market policy than SP), and the actual provision of health care services.

1.2 Structure of the report

The report, which aims to present a comprehensive analysis and understanding of EU support to social protection in third countries and regions, is structured in two volumes:

Volume I

- Chapter 1 – Introduction: gives an overall introduction to this report.
- Chapter 2 – Key methodological steps: introduces the main methodological aspects.
- Chapter 3 – Main findings: presents a performance assessment of past EU support and policy assessment of the EU strategy.
- Chapters 4 and 5 – Conclusions based on the answers to the Evaluation Questions, and Recommendations based on the Conclusions.

² Swaziland, Togo and Yemen were included later. See Chapter 2.2.

Volume II

- Synthesis Note presenting findings and conclusions of the field Country Reports.
- Country Reports.

Volume III

- Annex 1: Terms of Reference.
- Annex 2: List of documents consulted.
- Annex 3: List of people interviewed.
- Annex 4: Overview of EU-funded key interventions.
- Annex 5: Survey results.

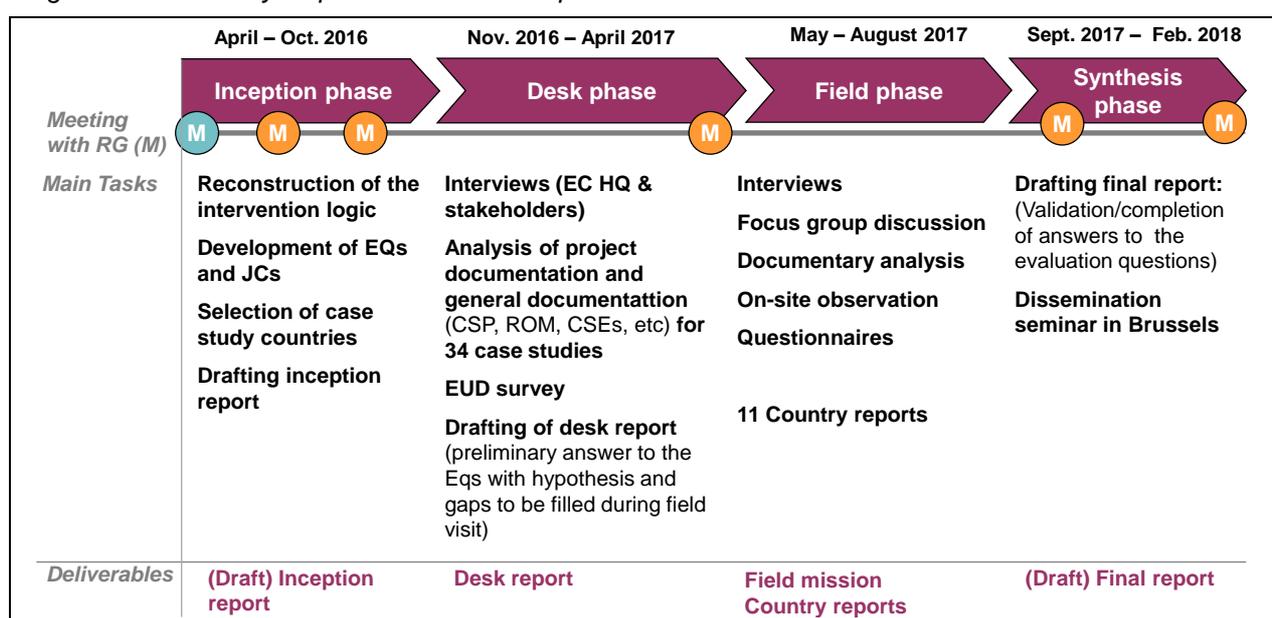
2 Overall methodological approach

An approach in four phases.

The methodology applied for this evaluation is based on the guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring, and evaluation³ developed by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiation (DG NEAR). The guidelines give precise indication on the design of the study, structure of the evaluation process in several phases, and provide an array of tools that can be used for evaluations.

The evaluation was conducted in four main phases (as summarised in Figure 2) between April 2015 and October 2017. The organisation of a dissemination seminar in Brussels is also envisaged and expected to be held early 2018. The figure also lists the main tasks in each phase, the ISG meetings held, and the deliverables for each phase. In line with the ToR, each phase started after formal approval of the deliverables of the previous phase.

Figure 2 Key steps of the evaluation process



³See: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhoodenlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2016/20160831-dg-near-guidelines-on-linking-planning-programming-vol-1-v0.4.pdf, version, from July 2016.

The evaluation was managed and supervised by the Directorate General NEAR MFF, Programming and Evaluation Unit. Evaluation progress was followed by an Inter-service Steering Group (ISG), chaired by DG NEAR A4 MFF, Programming, and Evaluation Unit (earlier the Thematic Support, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit), and consisting of members of various EU institutions: DG International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and the DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL) and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

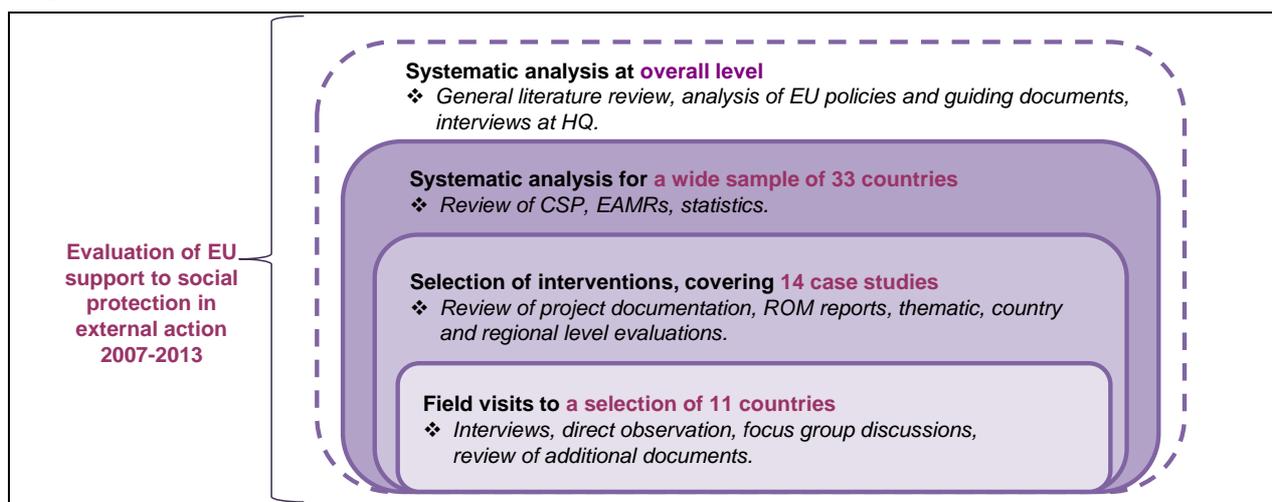
A range of tools used.

The evaluation process adopted a strategic approach that used various building blocks to gradually construct an answer to the EQs, and to formulate conclusions and recommendations. Given the purpose and conditions of the evaluation, the most appropriate design for the evaluation was considered to be a multiple case study, based on the use of a mixed-methods (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative) approach. At the synthesis phase, Case Study material, field mission Country Reports and the European Union Delegation (EUD) Survey were also used, when appropriate, not only to provide evidence at Indicator level, but as evidence at the Judgment Criterion level, as well.

2.1 Steps for data collection and analysis

In-depth analyses cannot be carried out for all interventions related to EU external support to social protection. It is important to reach a balance between a realistic approach based on a limited focus and an approach covering a range of interventions and contexts wide enough to allow for generalisation. Countries and interventions were systematically selected to obtain a relevant and representative portfolio for in-depth study. The figure below shows the methodological design for this evaluation.

Figure 3 Levels of analysis and data collection tools



Source: Particip GmbH (2017).

2.1.1 Selection of country case studies

Out of a wide sample of 36 countries with relevant EU-funded social protection interventions initially considered for the inception and desk phase⁴, 14 were selected for desk phase case studies and, of these, 11 for field study analysis. The selection process was carried out in consultation with ISG members and based on a set of criteria that included:

- Geographic financing instruments used to support SP (IPA, ENI, DCI, EDF) and diversity of contexts.⁵

⁴ 33 countries were already listed in the ToR. Three countries (Swaziland, Togo and Yemen) with relevant EU interventions in the area of SP were added to the overall sample during the desk phase.

⁵ The final sample contains 5 countries covered by IPA, 4 countries by ENI, 3 by DCI and 2 by EDF.

- Reference to SP in EU country programming documents and level of EU committed amounts in SP-related support.
- Thematic focus of the support to represent as much as possible the variety of support reflected in the six focus areas of support (see Figure 1).
- Type of support (implementation modality and channel used).

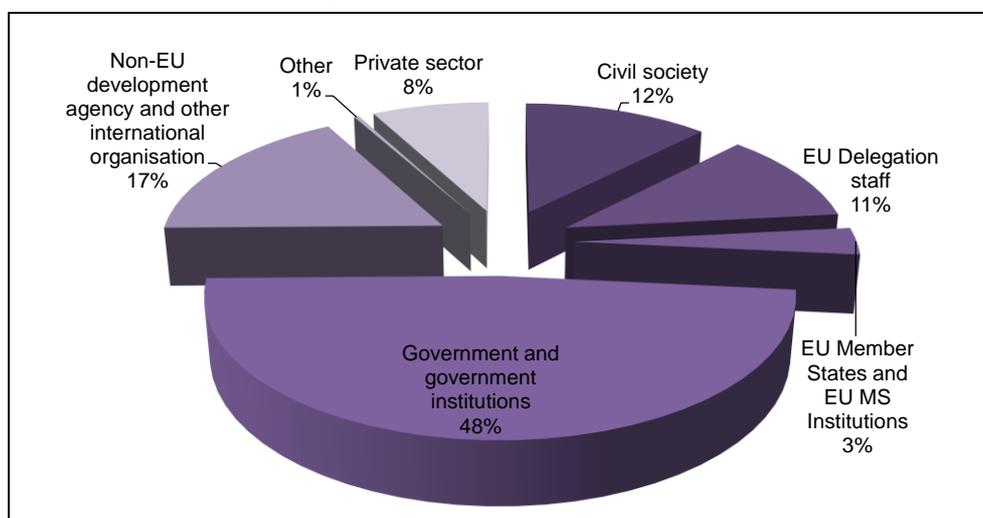
The size of the field phase sample was in line with the ToR, which foresaw 8 to 12 field cases. It has been kept large to maximise the diversity of cases covered during this phase. The table below presents the final list of countries covered by the field phase (see also 11 Country Reports in the Volume II).

Table 1 *Field study countries*

IPA	ENI	DCI/EDF
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Morocco	El Salvador
Turkey	Moldova	Kyrgyzstan
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Palestine	Ethiopia
Montenegro		Malawi

In total, around 320 persons were interviewed during the field phase covering a wide range of organisations – see Figure 4 (and Volume III, Annex 3).

Figure 4 *Stakeholders coverage*



Source: Particip GmbH internal analysis based on country reports.

2.1.2 Online survey to EUDs

An online EUD survey was elaborated with the aim of enriching the analysis and providing answers on issues difficult to analyse through documents or interviews in Brussels or the limited number of countries visited. The surveys covered responsiveness of EU strategy to country needs and alignment, policy dialogue, EU aid modalities, channels and instruments, EU coherence, coordination and complementarity, and EU value added issues, as well as ownership and EUD capacities for social protection.

Box 1 *EUD's survey response rate*

- 32 out of 33 countries targeted by the survey replied → **97%**.
- Regional coverage: IPA 7, ENI South 6, ENI East 6, DCI/EDF 11.
- Respondents' profile: 7 Heads of Cooperation, 8 Head of Operation section, 16 Project and programme managers/officers, 2 other staff.

The EUD survey results were used at two different points in time:

- Field visits: they facilitated a better focus of the interview guidelines. The EUDs survey was complemented by key informant interviews to validate some of the survey findings and to capture information on external factors that may have affected results.
- Synthesis analysis: they helped complement other analyses carried out during previous phases.

2.2 Challenges and limitations

There were challenges in obtaining the data and inconsistency in recording of, for example, DAC criteria – but, for the most part, these were overcome.

Overall, the various steps, techniques and tools utilised throughout the evaluation exercise were successfully followed and applied. The most important challenges and limitations were:

- Broad scope of the evaluation – In line with the ToR and reflecting consultations with the ISG, the evaluation team has adopted a broad view of what falls under the umbrella of social protection, including, for example, basic income support (often cash transfer) programmes, classic social insurance programmes (pensions, survivors' pensions, disability, maternity, unemployment, workman's compensation, etc.), access to basic health care, programmes to promote social inclusion, etc. As noted above and for obvious reasons, not every aspect of social protection was promoted or even pursued in every country.
- Information available in EU databases was not always easily retrievable. The team thus combined data extracted from Common External Relations Information System (CRIS), information found online and documentation shared by EUDs, geographical desks and, in some cases (some IPA beneficiaries), national authorities. The gathering of additional documents continued during the field phase. The documents collected were organised in a structured database which could be accessed by the relevant team members via a secured platform.
- The quantity, quality and relevance of the information available – collected from various sources and in different ways – for indicator-level analysis was sometimes limited. In particular, it proved difficult to gather data on outcome indicators for the last three-four years (the latest household survey data available were often related to the pre-2014 period and, in some instances, to the pre-2012 period). Often, quantitative point estimates were available only for a given year, but not multiple data points that would permit trend analysis. In some instances, qualitative data (stakeholders' opinions) could fill the gap. In others, it could not.
- Overall, data collection, including the Survey to EUDs, provided a reasonable and representative overview of the EU's cooperation strategy, but encountered some limitations, such as institutional memory issues due to the fact that the ToR covered not only the evaluation period strictly speaking (2007-2013, corresponding to the last Multi-annual Financial Framework) but also the subsequent period 2014-present (corresponding to the current MFF 2014-2020). Persons interviewed and surveyed were the ones currently in post, therefore the issues relating to the beginning of the period evaluated were less well reflected in their responses. Adding to the challenge was the fact that the degree of the EU's involvement in the area of social protection in the different countries varied widely.
- The relatively small number of countries analysed represents a compromise between the need for a reasonably broad range of cases and the need to achieve reasonable depth. Effort was made to include a broad range of countries, raising the issue of comparability.

3 Answers to the Evaluation Questions

3.1 EQ 1: Relevance

To what extent has EU support to social protection responded to clear overall strategic objectives on social protection and to specific needs of partner countries, including problems of poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion?



Rationale and coverage of the question

Relevance has to do with whether EU support in social protection has been consistent with evolving partner needs in the area as well as with EU policy priorities. The basic principles guiding EU social protection policies are inclusiveness, adequacy, sustainability, good governance, and involvement of social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and civil society. Under this EQ, we cover the alignment of objectives with (i) EU development policy and (ii) national policy frameworks and the involvement of government, social partners, and civil society in setting priorities for EU support. The principle of inclusiveness suggests that the EU should support the identification of socially excluded groups and, where appropriate, targeted programmes to bring them under the social protection umbrella. Relevance also requires appropriate use of statistical data (including gap filling when existing data is insufficient), and design of programmes in line with fiscal and institutional capacities and constraints.

Policy contexts differed starkly between regions. The IPA and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENI) countries inherited impaired Soviet-style SP systems with very wide coverage that fell into disarray as a result of economic and social collapse. There were also some peculiarities, such as generalized absence of social inclusion services and the emphasis on institutional care for children in need of protection and the disabled. In many DCI countries, and especially Latin America, there also was a heritage of contributory social security systems that served only the labour elite – and much the same situation prevailed in Turkey (an IPA beneficiary) and the countries of the European Neighbourhood South. In EDF countries, the situation was even more pronounced: social protection barely extended beyond civil servants, the military and workers in the international private sector. In virtually all partner countries, informality has posed a major policy challenge to the expansion of SP. On the one hand, it is a vital source of resilience and economic growth; a necessary buffer against absolute poverty. On the other, it stifles the development of formal social protection systems.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

EU support to social protection (SP) has been consistent with major EU policy commitments both before and after the 2012 Communication. For IPA beneficiaries, consistency relates to the context of the enlargement agenda and the need to promote social inclusion; for the European Neighbourhood East, it relates to the need to strengthen SP in the wake of economic collapse; in a number of DCI countries (especially in the Latin America region), emphasis was on improving the equity of SP systems that have historically been inequitable, and in EDF countries, support has responded to the need to develop SP systems essentially from the ground up. There was adequate differentiation between regions to take into account the special circumstances prevailing and to ensure relevance to country needs.

However, EU support to SP has not featured prominently in bilateral programming documents and these documents did not spell out specific objectives or strategic directions to guide implementation in this sector. While the EU has supported significant programmes, SP has not been a leading sector.

Supported interventions have responded to objectives reflecting the wide range of contexts and the specific history of cooperation in partner countries. In IPA beneficiaries, financial support, very largely demand-driven, focused on enhancing social cohesion through the strengthening of inclusion programmes and the development of community-based activities as a complement to public

interventions. More broadly, issues related to SP were in some cases raised in accession-related policy dialogue on, e.g. labour law. The emphasis on vulnerable populations was broadly reflected in all countries, as well; e.g. refugees in Palestine; children separated from their migrant parents in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, the mentally ill in Turkey, etc. In some countries (Palestine, Ethiopia, Malawi, El Salvador, to some extent Turkey), the main programmes supported combine cash social assistance transfers and targeted service delivery. EU support has been strongly oriented towards social assistance and social inclusion; there has been little involvement in social insurance, which limits the scope of support to SP.

Except in Sub-Saharan Africa, EU bilateral support to SP has not substantially increased either during the evaluation period 2007-2013 or subsequently. The most important developments have taken place in strategic terms at the global level. The EU is now developing approaches to combine SP development with humanitarian assistance, i.e. a joined-up approach with Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). The EU is now also developing a more systemic view which places social assistance and inclusion in the broader context of SP as a whole.

Reviewed interventions were strongly aligned with national SP policy frameworks where they existed and government priorities where they did not. In some countries (El Salvador, Palestine, Ethiopia), EU support has contributed to the development of broad SP policies. The design of the EU support followed participatory processes and actively involved partner authorities. In some instances, the participation of CSOs and social partners has been weak, although in the first case it has been increasing over time. The EU has been less involved in strengthening trade unions and employers' organisations for two reasons – the lack of formal institutional ties and the fact that in many countries, the social partners are weak and highly politicized.

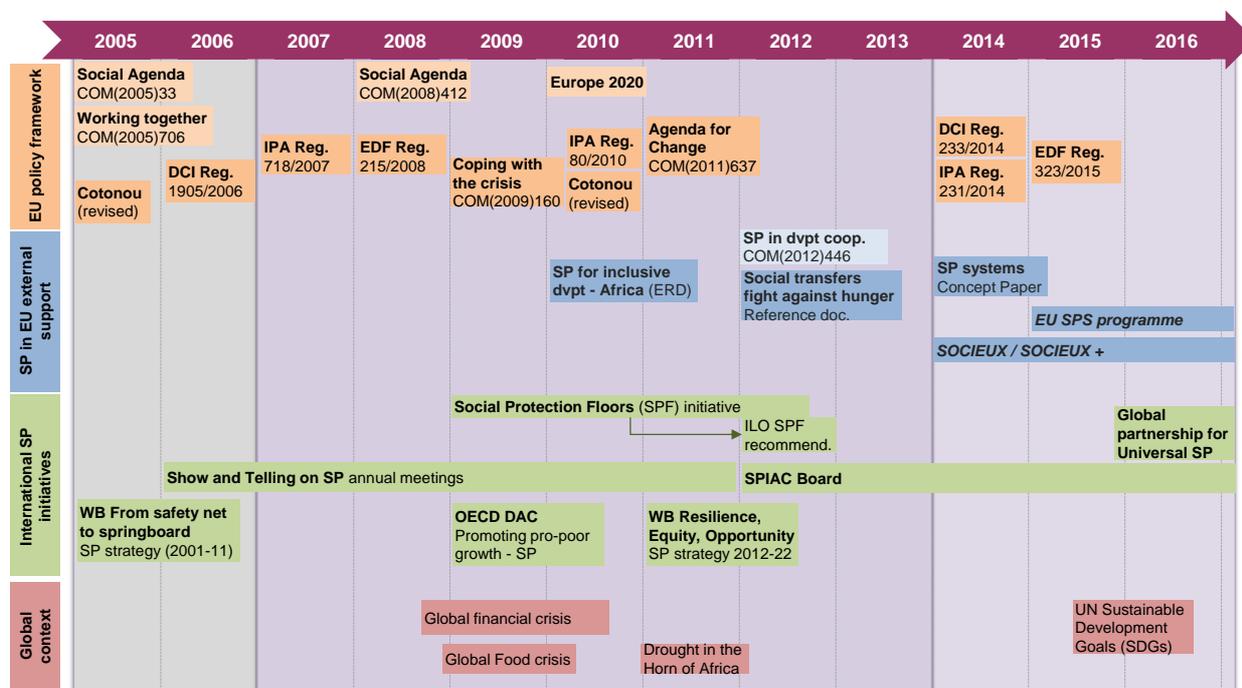
EU support to SP has been based on a sound analysis of the partner countries' contexts and the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups. In some instances, EU has provided specific support to strengthening national SP databases and, in 2009-2013, it has financed several large multi-country studies focusing on SP. But the EU has not systematically engaged in large support to strengthen national statistical systems related to SP and, although they have been largely useful, the EU supported studies on SP remained one-off exercises disconnected from regular analytical work. While Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL) provided some technical support to social security schemes in IPA beneficiaries and ENI countries, coordination with DG NEAR was weak.

3.1.1 Objectives pursued are consistent with the EU strategic framework for social protection and partner countries' national policy frameworks (JC 11)

EU support to SP has been broadly consistent with EU policy both before and after the 2012 Communication

EU support for social protection has been broadly coherent with the main evolution in the EU policy framework, international initiatives in the area of SP, and major changes in the international contexts – see Figure 5 below. In 2007-13, EU support for social protection followed the strategic orientations set forth in the 2006 European Development Consensus and the relevant External Finance Instrument Regulations (see an Annex IV). However, the EU lacked a SP policy strictly speaking; SP was subsumed under broader poverty reduction goals. Particular attention was paid to basic minimum income issues via support for conditional as well as unconditional cash transfers (e.g., among countries studied, Malawi, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine) and social inclusion, especially in IPA beneficiaries.

Figure 5 Evolution of the overall EU policy framework and major changes in the international context during the period 2005-2016



Source: Particip analysis (2017).

The 2012 Communication on SP (COM(2012)446)⁶, which focuses on development cooperation, contributed to clarifying the EU strategic orientations in the field of SP. The Communication is well aligned with the Agenda for Change⁷. It encouraged a rights-based approach to SP, respecting the call in the Agenda for greater attention to human rights including gender – in most countries studied, the rights-based approach to SP was strongly evident. In identifying fundamental guarantees and describing a process of long-term broadening and deepening of SP, it also incorporated the Agenda's emphasis on results and impact and offered a strategy for bringing a degree of SP to the very poorest members of society in line with the Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative driven by International Labour Organization (ILO).

However, evidence gathered during the field phase indicates that in only a handful of countries (e.g., El Salvador) is the Social Protection Floor (SPF) explicitly referenced in national policies. Programmes supported, from cash transfers to child protection to health finance reform have been consistent with the SPF but are not explicitly positioned within the SPF framework. Moreover, the EU has been little involved in those aspects of the SPF that have more to do with developing social insurance than strengthening social assistance (e.g., pensions, unemployment, maternity). A good example is disability: the EU has contributed a great deal to social inclusion of the disabled (e.g., Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey) through projects but, on the evidence gathered, has never grappled with the issue of disability insurance. While the actions designed / implemented after 2012 are broadly in line with the most relevant policy documents⁸, the

⁶ Communication (2012) 446: Social Protection in European Union External Support

⁷ See 'Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change' (COM(2011)0637 – SEC(2011)1172 – SEC(2011)1173; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0637&rid=1>).

⁸ Such as the Agenda for Change (2011), the 2012 Communication on social protection, and the new (2017) European Development Consensus.

2012 Communication remains an enabling document which provides little guidance to strategy in implementation. The 2015 DEVCO Concept Paper No. 4 on SP provides more useful guidance for programming and design in the context of development cooperation, but it is still too early to see whether this has had a significant influence on the overall EU support to SP.

In general, the EU's actions, while always relevant, have been somewhat scattered and failed to translate into a broad strategic approach in which support for programmes closely tied to poverty is combined with support for the development of social insurance systems. There have been some exceptions (Ethiopia and Palestine are examples); in addition to which, there are examples in which a long-term approach to building national capacity and sustainability has been evident (e.g., Malawi and Morocco). This suggests an opportunity for complementarity with donors who have experience in areas where the EU has been largely absent, namely the World Bank (with expertise in social insurance and social safety nets for the very poorest segments of the population), the International Labour Organization (with expertise in social security as classically defined), and MS with broad experience in rights-based SP (the Nordic countries, for example, in the typology of European social protection systems due to Gunnar Esping-Andersen⁹

EU support to SP is not prominent in bilateral programming documents or in programming itself.

Explicit references to SP are scarce and heterogeneous in EU bilateral programming documents related to the period 2007-2013. SP is explicitly identified as a focal sector of cooperation only in a few countries studied during the field phase (e.g. Moldova, Kyrgyzstan), but in most countries where the EU has been active in this area, SP was indirectly dealt with in the context of broader sectors (e.g. "Employment" or "Social Development" or "Social Inclusion" in the Western Balkans, "Social Cohesion" in some ENI and DCI countries such as Ukraine and El Salvador, "Rural Development," "Human Development" or "Food Security" in other ENI, EDF, and DCI countries such as Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, and Palestine. Although references to SP are, where they exist, clearly linked to the broad goals of poverty reduction and social inclusion, EU bilateral programming documents do not spell out specific objectives or strategic directions for the EU support to SP as a whole. Some programming documents related to the current multiannual financing cycle make more explicit references to SP (e.g. in some IPA beneficiaries and a few DCI/EDF countries such as Lesotho and Paraguay).

In general, there is no evidence of a significant evolution (between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020) in the way SP was integrated in the programming of EU bilateral assistance. However, there has been recently increasing interest in integrating social protection and humanitarian assistance through closer collaboration of DG DEVCO and ECHO. There are examples of fruitful coordination between DG NEAR and other agencies such as UNWRA and World Food Programme WFP (Palestine and Ethiopia) and ECHO (Palestine and Turkey), or United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF and United Nations Development Programme UNDP (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro). In one country studied (Palestine) thought is being given to supporting a major ILO-implemented initiative for social insurance reform.

A diversity of pursued objectives reflecting a wide range of contexts

As further detailed in coming paragraphs, analysis of bilateral assistance implemented in SP since 2007 shows that EU support responded to a diversity of objectives and needs reflecting the very wide range of geographical contexts and the specific history of EU cooperation in the partner countries. In IPA

⁹ Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press.

beneficiaries and, to a large extent, in ENI countries, the objectives of the support to SP have been in line with the Enlargement / Association agenda and the EU internal social policy framework; i.e. the *acquis* and approximation; however, it must be kept in mind that SP is not part of the *acquis*. EU support mainly responded to specific issues of inclusion (e.g., of women, people with disabilities, children, geographically remote populations, and linguistic and ethnic groups, especially the Roma). In other regions, the support has been strongly rooted in past large development cooperation programmes implemented in areas such as rural development and food security (e.g. Ethiopia) and social cohesion (e.g. El Salvador). In these countries, the focus was on the reduction of poverty and inequalities. In all countries, the support to SP has entailed a strong social inclusion dimension and, overall, there has been greater emphasis put on strengthening the delivery of social assistance programmes than on providing large support to social insurance schemes or to comprehensive SP systems. This is not to be interpreted as detrimental to relevance; in fact, it represents an effective division of labour with the World Bank and ILO and recognition of where the EU is best equipped to add value. It also presents opportunities for strengthening complementarity.

Objectives pursued in the IPA context (2007-2013)

In IPA beneficiaries, the EU support to SP has been related to the accession negotiations and, more specifically, to the “Social Policy and Employment” chapter of the EU *acquis* – see the box below. It has mostly concerned two broad sets of objectives: 1) support to national and local actors to enhance inclusion programmes targeting children, women, geographically remote populations, and people with disabilities as well as social integration activities for Roma and other ethnic minority communities; 2) support to national employment and education agencies, with a focus on the implementation of active labour market measures and services, and the promotion of life-long learning policies (e.g. Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey).

At the same time, as stated above, SP is not part of the “hard” *acquis*, limiting the EU’s ability to engage in policy dialogue on broad SP-related reforms. EU financial support to SP in the Western Balkans focussed on very specific issues of social inclusion.

The EU has not provided large-scale support to broad reform programmes on SP nor has it funded any comprehensive programme focusing on social security schemes in any of the countries reviewed, leaving such actions to other donors such as the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). There is also no explicit link between the SP interventions reviewed and broader public administration (and public financial management) reform programmes in these countries. While IPA country annual progress reports on enlargement usually contain an explicit section on SP, evidence on policy dialogue specifically focusing on SP is limited. In a number of IPA beneficiaries, DG EMPL was in charge of policy dialogue, which was more oriented towards building capacity to manage structural funds rather than sector reform. However, when SP issues emerged prominently in accession negotiations dealing with, e.g., labour law, there was strong EU engagement in favour of approaches compatible with European good practice.

Box 2 Social protection under IPA

Financial support and policy dialogue related to SP under IPA are related to the accession negotiations around the Chapter 19 “Social Policy and Employment” of the EU *acquis*. The *acquis* in this Chapter

includes minimum standards in the areas of labour law, equal treatment of men and women in employment and social security, health, and safety at work. In addition, special binding rules have been set to ensure protection from discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation, age, faith, or belief. Employment policy includes the EU's strategic objectives aimed at ensuring full employment, good working conditions, high productivity, and social cohesion in accordance with the "flexicurity" strategy¹⁰ which combines flexibility in the labour markets with social safety nets and training opportunities. Apart from Turkey, where it supported an innovative conditional cash transfer programme with a strong gender component, the EU has concentrated its financial assistance almost exclusively on social inclusion in IPA beneficiaries.

Through measures supported by IPA I, in particular its Component IV Human resources development, the EU helped preparing candidate countries' participation in the EU cohesion policy and the European Social Fund (ESF).

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/> & <http://ec.europa.eu/social/>

Objectives pursued in the ENI context

The diverse SP systems and contexts and the specific history of cooperation with the EU in the sub-regions of the Neighbourhood translated in a variety of SP interventions. In Palestine, the EU through its PEGASE programme (a direct transfer to the Palestinian Authority) supported a national social assistance system targeting vulnerable families. This was essentially a lifeline to the Palestinian Authority coherent with the EU's strong commitment to an eventual two-state solution. In coordination with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), EU supported benefits to refugees as well. In Azerbaijan (a case study, albeit not a field visit country), the support focused on capacity building of national institutions such as agencies involved in the insurance-pension system with an emphasis on EU approximation and the strengthening of employment and social services for the youth and people with disabilities. In Ukraine (a case study, but not field mission country), there was also a focus on aligning the national legislation with EU standards and norms. In Moldova, the EU supported broad reforms in the social assistance sector which covered cash benefits and integrated social care services (at the community and district levels in both rural and semi-rural areas) to the most vulnerable population, especially the disabled, elderly, children and the poor. The Moldova programme should be placed in the context of large-scale labour migration of both men and women to Europe, with adverse consequences on children separated from their parents who are labour migrants.

Objectives pursued in the DCI context

EU support to SP policies in DCI countries has covered a wide range of issues from improving the targeting of social assistance and the budgeting of sector interventions to the management of social service delivery. In Kyrgyzstan, the EU assisted the partner government in strengthening the national pro-poor policy framework by modernising the country's SP policy framework and management system. There was significant coherence between the EU's support and the need to address the consequences of migration in the country. The EU supported a significant reform of child protection policy (as in Kyrgyzstan, a DCI country, as well), the emphasis being on de-institutionalization and services to children left behind. In Latin America (e.g. El Salvador, Paraguay), the EU through budget support has accompanied the implementation of large social programmes (including cash transfer mechanisms) aiming at reducing poverty, social and economic inequality and social exclusion. It has also provided technical and policy support through

¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=102>

regional interventions (e.g. EUROsocial II¹¹). In general, the EU support has had a strong policy dimension in most of the DCI countries reviewed and / or visited.

Objectives pursued in the EDF context

In EDF countries, EU support to SP was closely linked to interventions (essentially cash and in-kind transfer programmes) implemented in the area of food security and, to a lesser extent, to other areas such as HIV/AIDS (Lesotho). HIV/AIDS was the subject of a major fairly recent evaluation, as well as the more recent evaluation of EU support to health, and was not a focal area of this evaluation. The EU supported a cash and in-kind conditional transfer programme (the Productive Safety Net Programme) in Ethiopia that has become an internationally recognised model. Starting from a food security emergency humanitarian intervention, the Productive Safety Net Programme has gradually evolved into a broad anti-poverty programme consistent with the SPF approach and government priorities. It is currently at the heart of an ambitious government effort to launch a comprehensive SP system, and as such stands as an exception to the general observation that the EU has been little involved in strategic approaches. In Malawi, the EU contributed, through a programme implemented by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), to cash transfers.

Alignment & Participatory processes

There was strong alignment of specific SP interventions and, more generally, of EU country programming, with national policy frameworks and priorities where they existed. Interventions implemented have been broadly relevant as they responded to clear specific needs in partner countries.

The design of the EU support followed broadly participatory processes with active participation of partner authorities. However, in some instances (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina), the absence of a SP policy or a comprehensive strategic framework made it difficult for the partner authorities to engage meaningfully in the design of a comprehensive set of support measures. EU support has generally increased the capacity of civil society organisations to participate in policy formulation and implement programmes.

The EU has been less involved in strengthening social dialogue (i.e., the role of trade unions and employers' organisations) for two reasons – the lack of formal institutional ties (unlike the ILO) and the fact that in many countries, the social partners are weak and highly politicized (e.g., Palestine). The EU is also concentrating its support on the poor and marginalised, who are unlikely to hold formal employment contracts. However, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, EU supported the local International Labour Organization office to strengthen and increase the social partnership dialogue and supported improved employment services as well as efforts to address informality in employment. In Palestine, as stated, the EU is currently considering supporting the International Labour Organization in helping to develop the recently mandated national social security system.

Main developments in country programming since 2014

Although Indicative Strategy Papers (ISP) for the period 2014-2017 make more explicit references to SP, the EU support to SP in the IPA region broadly follows the same objectives as during the previous period, i.e. the fight against social exclusion. SP has not become a major area of support. However, introduction of the "economic governance" process with the enlargement countries, inspired by the European Semester¹², provides a new approach also to SP, notably by better linking the fiscal aspects and the poverty alleviation

¹¹ See: eurososocial-ii.eu

¹² See https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en.

with social inclusion ones. Other policy areas such as Public Finance Management (PFM) or the rule of law have continued to benefit from stronger demand for support from partner countries, more political attention on the EU side and more resources in IPA allocations.

The sector approach was not yet used under IPA I to support SP-related reform processes despite an increased emphasis on such approaches in the broader IPA strategic framework. EU support to SP has continued to rely on two main levels of intervention: i) IPA technical and financial assistance to support individual social inclusion projects; ii) dialogue on specific areas of legal and policy reforms (e.g. rights of traditionally excluded groups) in the context of accession negotiations.

In the ENI region, continuity with past support has also been high. The EU has extended its support to SP in Palestine and in the context of broad employment or health reform programmes in some northern African countries (e.g., Morocco). At the end of 2016, a Commission Decision devoted EUR 100 million support to a SP system in Morocco. Further actions are foreseen in Jordan and Lebanon. In some DCI countries (e.g. Paraguay, El Salvador, Bangladesh), there has been a more explicit recognition of SP as a unique area of cooperation, but, in general, SP has not become a new major area of cooperation and there has been strong continuity of the EU support to SP with the programmes implemented in the previous period.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region where the most important increases in support to SP occurred in recent years. The EU has expanded its experience with social cash transfers and has made increasing efforts to support a strategic approach. The increased attention given to SP in EU cooperation with EDF countries is related to three main dynamics: 1) in general, more prominence given to SP in bilateral and regional programming, often in the context of the “Food and Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agriculture” (FNSSA) cooperation area (e.g. Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Ethiopia, or with the African Union through the Pan-African Programme); 2) increased linkages with humanitarian actions in the context of the resilience agenda (despite the fact that the resilience Communication does not refer to SP); and 3) more regular support provided via dedicated thematic programmes focusing on SP (see next paragraph). However, the scope of the activities focusing on supporting SP systems has remained limited. This is partly explained by the important resources required to support large SP schemes or broad social protection policy reforms and the fact that, although it has gained more prominence in several countries, SP still remains an area of secondary importance often tackled in the context of broader programmes focussing on rural development and, increasingly, on food and nutrition security.

Evolutions in thematic instruments

While the importance of SP in EU geographic programmes did not significantly increase in partner countries – except in the Sub-Saharan African region and some specific cases (see above) – in recent years, this has been somewhat compensated by a greater emphasis on SP in thematic programmes. Before 2012, EU support provided only some limited support to SP under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) thematic instrument and the DCI thematic programmes Investing in People and NSA-LA. In particular, the EIDHR support focused on supporting human rights interventions implemented by non-state actors at the local level. In addition to the funding of small-scale social inclusion projects in partner countries, the support provided through the “Investing in People” programme covered various multi-country SP-related projects, including support to research (e.g. Overseas Development Institute’s (ODI) research on informality in South Asia

and the 2012 Study on Social Protection in Sub-Saharan Africa)¹³ and pilot actions carried out by international partners (e.g. International Labour Organization pilot projects to support countries in the formulation of integrated SP and employment promotion policy).

However, in general, actions supported through thematic programmes (except a few cases like the joint projects with ILO) did not look at SP systems comprehensively and remained ad hoc. The 2012 Communication on SP prompted the launch of new large initiatives aimed at addressing SP challenges at a broader level. Two specific SP thematic programmes the Social Protection European Union Expertise in Development Cooperation (SOCIEUX) facility and the EU Social Protection Support programme (SPSP) started in the period 2012-2014 with the view to enhance EU support to institutional capacity building, generation of knowledge and sharing of experience in the area of SP. In addition, the EU has been developing approaches to link social protection and humanitarian assistance (as provided by ECHO) in line with the increasing allocation of aid resources to fragile and post-conflict states.

3.1.2 Needs and target groups clearly identified in the design of EU support (JC 12)

A design based on a sound understanding of the context

EU support to SP has been based on sound analysis of the partner countries' contexts, including understanding of the legal, policy and institutional environment related to SP and of the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups. EU support has benefitted from in-depth analytical work carried out by national institutions and international organizations active in the sector (including World Bank, the International Labour Organization ILO, and other United Nations UN agencies). These were particularly useful, e.g. in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where political controversies have prevented release of census results. Much the same situation prevails in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where data by ethnicity are politically charged. The EU has carried out its own contextual analyses at three levels: 1) broad country assessments during the multi-year programming of the bilateral assistance; 2) detailed analysis of specific thematic issues during the design of individual SP interventions; 3) and hoc studies (country or multi-country) focussing on SP – see Table 2 below.

The EU has also built on lessons from past interventions, often relying on a long history of cooperation in various policy areas related to SP (e.g. social cohesion in Latin America or food security in Sub-Saharan Africa). The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) cash and in-kind transfers programme in Ethiopia has been the subject of regular impact assessments carried out by the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Table 2 Overview of EU multi-country studies on SP

Region/country	Year of publication	Main features
IPA		
Western Balkans (AL, BA, KV, MK, ME, RS)	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned by DG EMPL. Focus on: i) poverty & social exclusion; ii) pension systems; iii) health and long term care. Structure of the report – social inclusion, health and long-term care, pensions -- based on: i) a 2003 study covering 13 candidate countries; and ii) the EU common objectives set out in the framework

¹³ See: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/study-social-protection-sub-saharan-africa-final-report-03082013_en and <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10525.pdf>

<i>Region/country</i>	<i>Year of publication</i>	<i>Main features</i>
		of the EU Open Method for Consultation.
ENI		
Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned by DG EMPL. Structure of the report based on the Western Balkans exercise.
Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	2011	As above.
DCI		
Central America (country cases: SV, GT, HN and NI)	2010	Strong focus on conditional cash and in-kind transfers.
EDF		
<u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u>	2010	“European Development Report”: focussed on SP in Sub-Saharan Africa; benefitted from contributions from a wide range of stakeholders.
<u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u> (country cases: GH and LS)	2013	Covers a variety of themes: fiscal framework, informal work context, livelihoods, etc.

Coverage of the partner countries’ SP needs for reform

The comprehensiveness of the EU’s analysis of SP, including the summary elements presented in 2015 DEVCO Concept Paper No. 4 on SP, contrasts with the narrow focus adopted in the interventions eventually implemented. In most cases reviewed, the EU has tackled only a specific aspect of partner countries’ overall needs for reforms in SP and the rationale for selection is not always clear in programming and project documents. There has not always been appropriate attention to sequencing, i.e. to achieving substantial PFM reform before supporting social protection reform – an example being Palestine, where the Ministry of Finance displays little interest in PFM. In IPA and ENI countries, broad strategic issues such as sustainable financing of social security schemes and the coherence of the overall SP policy framework were barely addressed by the support provided because it was so focused on specific groups and social inclusion. DG EMPL provided some support in these areas but rarely in close coordination with interventions supported by DG NEAR in IPA beneficiaries. In EDF and DCI Least Developed Countries, the focus on strengthening social assistance was relevant given the broad goal of poverty reduction. In middle-income countries, the EU provided some support to specific insurance schemes (mostly health, e.g., Morocco), but it has not tried to link these initiatives to broader SP reforms. With graduation, the EU has been absent from Upper Middle Income Countries in need of serious social protection reform. An important exception is China, where the third phase of a long-running technical assistance (TA) project supporting the Social Security Institute of the Ministry of Labour is being taken over by the Partnership Instrument.

Well identified needs of the most vulnerable groups

EU programming and project documents show a precise identification of the most vulnerable groups with a detailed analysis of the uncovered needs. There has also been a structured analysis of vulnerable groups’ rights, including of women, children, refugees and indigenous linguistic and ethnic groups (e.g. in IPA and ENI countries). The design of the EU support to SP has adequately evolved with the partner countries’ strategic frameworks as illustrated by the integration of the particular needs of urban population in social assistance programme in El Salvador, steps to address labour migration issues in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, and support to develop broad social protection strategies in Ethiopia and Palestine.

Efforts to fill data gaps and improve their coherence

The EU relied extensively on official statistics which are usually updated through household surveys. However, there have often been issues with these data: comprehensiveness (in terms of both thematic and geographic coverage), regularity, consistency over time, etc. The EU has recently published a reference document (2017 DEVCO Concept Paper No. 5 on indicators to measure SP performance), which among other objectives, aimed at reviewing key indicators used by multilateral and bilateral agencies and assessing current coverage and gaps in measuring SP at international level. At country level, the EU has consistently cooperated with the World Bank and national authorities to improve data systems to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors (e.g., Turkey, Palestine) by improving data systems. In some instances (especially, where it was engaged in policy support through modalities such as budget support), the EU has provided substantial support to strengthening data collection on SP indicators (e.g. Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho and El Salvador). The EU has consistently supported the Central Bureau of Statistics in Palestine. The EU now recognizes the demand for strengthening social protection statistics in acute situations (e.g. Yemen), where emergency interventions have been implemented although it was known that the beneficiary list was inaccurate. Despite clear efforts in this area, lack of resources and political will at national level often hampered the development of national statistical capacities related to SP. Finally, although they have been largely useful, the EU-supported studies on SP carried out in various sub-regions during the period 2009-2013 have been one-off exercises and they were not explicitly embedded in regular analytical work on SP.

3.2 EQ 2: Basic social protection

To what extent has EU support to social protection helped to improve access to adequate social services and basic income for all, and in particular for those in need of protection?



Rationale and coverage of the question

Social Protection is a set of public and private policies and programmes aimed at reducing social and economic risk and vulnerability, and to alleviate extreme poverty and deprivation. Social protection consists (following World Bank Atlas of Social Protection) of:

- Social insurance: contributory pensions (old age, survivors, disability) and other social insurance (occupational injuries benefits, paid sickness leave benefits, health, maternity/paternity benefits).
- Social assistance: unconditional cash transfers, cash transfers, social pension, food and in-kind transfers, school feeding, public works, fee waivers and other social assistance.
- Unemployment: contributory and non-contributory out-of-work income maintenance.

Almost all countries, however poor, have legislatively mandated social insurance programmes as well as some provision for social assistance, but often access is limited to only a few persons (those in the formal sector in the case of social insurance; those able to negotiate the administrative system in the case of social assistance). Coverage rates are an essential variable – what proportion of populations in need is effectively covered by various social protection programmes set up with EU support? Have the special needs of the informal sector (and agricultural workers) and children have been addressed in EU support, whether through policy dialogue or programmes?

Overall, the issue addressed by this Evaluation Question (EQ) is whether EU support contributed to improving access / coverage and how it addressed the challenges and difficulties encountered. Universal access to adequate basic medical care is a fundamental component of the ILO's Social Protection Floor. Also part of the SPF are programmes that provide basic income security through social assistance and unconditional cash transfers, non-contributory social pensions, food and in-kind transfers, and so on. The gender dimension of social protection is fundamental because women face risks that are either unique to them (childbirth) or affect them more than they affect men (the risk of surviving into extreme old age). Among sources used to address the indicators and JCs underlying the answer to this EQ are the ILO's bi-annual World Social Protection Report and Social Security Inquiry (ISSI) database, the International Social Security Association (ISSA) / U.S. Social Security Administration's joint Social Protection Programmes Around the World report and the World Bank's Atlas of Social Protection (ASPIRE). Most national Ministries, social security institutes, and national statistical institutes have websites that can be mined for data. In some cases, data disaggregated by age, gender, and income group were available; in other cases they were not.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

The EU has contributed significantly to increasing access to basic social services and basic income in many settings. The EU's contribution has been in the areas of social assistance and social inclusion, with very little involvement in social insurance. Virtually all the countries where the EU works have a social insurance system in place, but coverage is often very low. The EU's decision to concentrate on social assistance and social inclusion is consistent with the EU's focus on the poorest and most vulnerable populations, very few of whom will have formal labour contracts that give them access to social insurance. While outputs and results of EU interventions have been consistent with social protection objectives, overall effectiveness was weakened by the fact that they did not reflect a systemic view. The EU's main contributions include:

- Providing greater access to basic social services for excluded and marginalised populations. Such programmes were particularly characteristic of EU financial support to SP in the Western Balkans.
- Strengthening health systems, e.g. through budget support in Morocco and Moldova. Smaller, focused health sector interventions have focused on, e.g. de-institutionalization of the disabled in Turkey and primary care-based mental health services in Palestine.
- Strengthening social protection systems through sector budget support in El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, and Ethiopia and, closely related, direct financial transfers via PEGASE in Palestine.
- Implementing cash transfer programmes (some with a food component) in a range of countries; with the Western Balkans being an exception.
- Supporting and addressing children's needs in most countries studied.

Among these areas, EU involvement has been greatest in cash transfer programmes, which have a history going back to the work of the Food Security Programme. Such programmes have continued to be a focus of attention in the post-evaluation period. As documented below, such programmes have produced documented poverty alleviation results in Ethiopia, Palestine, Malawi, Moldova, and other countries. On the other hand, while cash transfers can alleviate poverty, their very low level makes it impossible for them to actually lift households out of poverty. In some instances (Ethiopia, Malawi, Palestine), despite positive impact assessments, they clearly have not achieved that higher goal.

Reasons for the scattered nature of results include the small share of social protection in total aid budgets, the weakness of country-level policy dialogue, and the absence, until 2012, of an EU policy in the area. During most of the evaluation period, the EU was largely absent from the area of system-wide social protection reform and development. Emerging exceptions are Ethiopia and Palestine where, in part with EU support, responsible ministries have drafted ambitious national social protection plans whose implementation, however, will be largely in the future.

With respect to gender equality, there is evidence that EU-backed cash transfer programmes for mothers and children are helping to relieve gender inequality in some countries (e.g., Turkey, El Salvador). Moreover, while programming documents mainstream gender issues and EU supported social protection

interventions contain quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender equity, there is no evidence of EU gender expertise having been systematically involved in social protection interventions design and implementation; i.e., no evidence of mainstreaming. In the ENI region, measurable quantitative indicators of gender equality were systematically lacking.

While the EU's focus on social assistance implicitly takes informality into account – many if not most beneficiaries will be in the informal sector -- the last evaluation to cover this terrain concluded that the EU had not done enough to take informality into account. This is a complicated policy area, and the EU has yet to come fully to grips with it. Official labour market policy (e.g., Palestine) is to eliminate informality, a goal at the heart of the ILO's approach. Yet, informal work in many poor settings is a necessity. In better off settings (e.g., Turkey, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), high contribution rates and poor service encourage workers, even highly skilled ones, into informal employment.

3.2.1 Social protection coverage and uptake extended / broadened with EU support (JC 21)

The assessment of the JC differs depending on whether one is looking at social inclusion, social assistance, or social insurance.

The assessment of the JC differs sharply depending on whether one considers the social insurance or social assistance and, closely related to the latter, social inclusion pillars of social protection. While there are examples of positive developments, there is little evidence that social insurance was broadened with EU support. There are several reasons for this. Social insurance, for the most part, is associated with formal labour contracts, and in many of the countries where the EU supported social protection, informality is rife and, in some cases as well, agriculture predominates. This is not only true in the poorest countries – among case study countries, e.g. Malawi, Ethiopia, El Salvador – but many better-off ones, as well, e.g. the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Palestine.

The EU's focus on poverty and vulnerability naturally leads it to be most concerned by groups outside the formal sector, making a contribution to social insurance coverage expansion problematic. Institutional factors come into play, as well: the EU has little capacity in formal social insurance systems, and what little capacity exists is in DG EMPL, not in DG NEAR or DG DEVCO. However, while DG EMPL has responsibility for coordinating formal social insurance systems in the EU (via the European Semester), developing, transition, and accession countries lie outside its core SP business. Finally, there are issues of comparative advantage and division of labour. In many partner countries (among case study countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro), the World Bank and International Labour Organization have been involved in supporting social insurance reform.

There have been a few exceptional cases where the EU has supported SP policy reforms that contain substantial social insurance components. Two are Ethiopia and Palestine, where the EU, via its support to cash transfer social assistance schemes, has found itself also supporting relevant ministries in the elaboration of broad social protection reforms. In El Salvador, the EU was involved in the launching of a universal old-age pension, a form of social insurance. The picture is entirely different in the areas of social inclusion and social assistance. In the Western Balkans, the EU backed policy reforms to better meet the needs of populations at risk of social exclusion– the disabled, women, children, the Roma, and the elderly.

Some EU support translated into high-level institution strengthening and capacity development (as in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, as well) but success in a number of countries was most notable at the decentralized or local level, where the EU supported governance reforms and local capacity to deliver basic social services. There are numerous examples to be gleaned from

country reports – community group homes for the disabled in Turkey, primary-level mental health interventions in Gaza, deinstitutionalization of children in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. These and other examples well document that the EU has significantly contributed to protecting the vulnerable and marginalised by improving coverage with basic social services. The EU has supported important cash transfer programmes, all of which seek to deliver a very modest basic minimum income to the very poorest. Among case study countries, such programmes were supported in El Salvador (PACSES), Palestine (PEGASE), Ethiopia (Productive Safety Net Programme), and Malawi. Cash transfer programmes were also supported in Kyrgyzstan and Moldova.

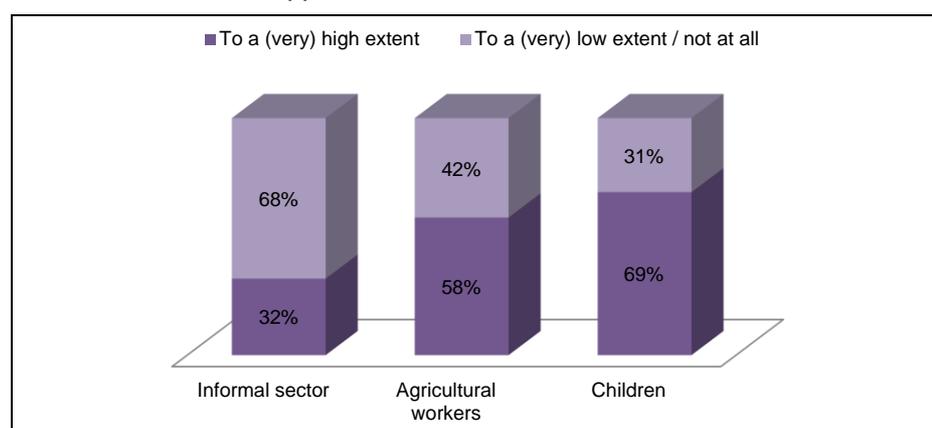
Often, support was in the form of budget support to the relevant ministry and one focus of attention was improving targeting of benefits (i.e. the fight against inclusion and exclusion error to maximize the anti-poverty impact). This often involved EU TA and fruitful working relations with the World Bank, regional development banks, and UN agencies.

With EU support, approaches have been piloted, programmes have been expanded, and benefit levels – while never sufficient to actually lift households out of poverty, but only to ameliorate their condition – have been increased. Women, children, and the elderly have disproportionately benefited as a result of the EU's focus on marginalised and vulnerable populations.

EU support to social protection has not sufficiently taken the needs of the informal sector into account.

The special challenges posed by the informal sector were indirectly taken into account because most of the population benefitting from EU support to SP works either in the informal sector or agriculture (which, strictly speaking, should be considered separately). In the online survey, only the Palestine, El Salvador and Kyrgyzstan EUDs report having explicitly addressed informality and only to a low extent in the latter two cases (see below results of the EUD Survey).

Figure 6 Extent to which special needs of the informal sector, of agricultural workers and of children have been addressed by EU support between 2007 and 2013



Base: EUDs (n=32). Source: Survey analysis, Particip (2017).

According to the “European Commission thematic evaluation of Support to Employment and Social Inclusion” (September 2011), EU support worldwide suffered from inadequate attention to access for workers outside formal employment. The EU-SPS programme, in collaboration with the ILO, is undertaking a major mapping of the informal sector in 20 countries. At the EU, as well as in other donors and agencies, there is a certain institutional inconsistency in the approach taken to the informal sector. While many governments (Turkey, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Palestine

are good examples among the case study countries) place the elimination of informality high among their labour market policy priorities, the fact is that the formal sector is unable to absorb the large number of job-seekers. Indeed, informality is not always an option of last resort, but rather a deliberate choice to avoid formal sector social charges that are perceived to be excessive and to deliver little benefit. For instance, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, highly skilled computer programmers prefer to be informal so as to avoid social charges and taxes; they reportedly decline formal employment. This is a social protection issue that the EU has not effectively addressed.

The EU has strongly supported and addressed children's needs in most countries.

As discussed at the beginning of this JC assessment, the EU has strongly supported and addressed children's needs in most case study countries (see also Figure 6). This is particularly true in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, El Salvador, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Paraguay and Ukraine. In Palestine, while the Cash Transfer Programme (CTP), was not child focused, children have benefitted from it. According to the EUD Survey, the needs of children in El Salvador have been addressed to a great extent in policy dialogue, but to a lesser extent in government programmes. Ethiopia, Moldova, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lesotho targeted children as vulnerable groups or main beneficiaries of EU programmes. In both Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, special attention was paid to the impact of labour migration on children. There was significant de-institutionalization of children from residential institutions in Moldova and, in Kyrgyzstan, child protection was introduced to the social welfare system. In Palestine, EU support through UNWRA was vital in ensuring primary health care and education services to children.

There are good specific examples of SP programmes dealing with children, e.g. the Abrazo programme in Paraguay, which has progressively contributed to reduce child labour in the streets; the SP and inclusion programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which contributed to strengthening SP policies and mechanisms for children at municipal level; and the Child Grant Programme in Lesotho that has become self-funded by the government. In a number of case study countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Malawi and Palestine, UNICEF has been a privileged EU partner.

3.2.2 Universal access to adequate health services put in place / strengthened with EU support (JC 22)

Universal health care access: support from EU, but progress remains slow in many countries, sometimes due to factors that the EU cannot reasonably address through its support.

Evidence shows that the EU has supported universal access to basic health services in at least seven out of fourteen countries reviewed: Azerbaijan, El Salvador, Moldova, Palestine, Paraguay, Ukraine, and Morocco. In Moldova despite a long history of the EU supporting health sector reform (e.g. EUR 46.6 million in budget support during 2008-2013), access to basic health care remains unsatisfactory – salaries are inadequate, so under-the-table payments for basic medical care are common and pharmaceutical prices are well above international index prices. In El Salvador, besides direct access to health services, improvements have been made regarding the proportion of health costs paid out of pocket, mainly thanks to the reduction in drug costs associated with the Ley del Medicamento approved in 2014.

Overall, however, health reform in El Salvador continues to experience difficulties related to fiscal sustainability, and human resources (particularly in

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

rural areas). In Morocco, the RAMED health-card programme supported by the EU has helped expand access to basic care, although it has had the unintended result of straining the health care system as the number of care-seekers has surged, particularly at hospital level (see next paragraph). Many of these problems are institutional and structural and cannot be blamed on the poor design of EU support.

Good examples of EU effectiveness are found:

- In Palestine, where the EU has contributed to improve access to health care through supporting United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and financing the referral operations of the six East Jerusalem Hospitals.
- In Azerbaijan, through a twinning project aimed at capacity building, revision of the legislative framework and programmes on disabled persons.
- In Ethiopia, through the Protection of Basic Services (PBS) programme.
- In Paraguay, where spending on universal health programmes has seen an increase from 0.03% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2009 to 0.17% of GDP in 2014.

In Ukraine, the health sector has only been supported by some TA. Among field visit countries, the major EU contribution to increasing access to health care has been in Morocco, where the EU supported comprehensive health care finance reform that resulted in the RAMED health card that guarantees basic access to the poorest members of the population. Here too, though, and combined with the persistent weakness of the primary health care system in rural areas, RAMED has resulted in the flooding of regional hospitals with “RAMEDistes”, threatening hospitals’ financial sustainability. The recent expansion of social insurance health coverage to students and the informal sector is far from being assured in financial terms.

The EU did not have specific projects supporting access to health services in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Lesotho, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the health sector has been mainly supported by the World Bank (WB). EU-supported cash transfer programmes described earlier have everywhere had a favourable impact on child health services (although actual impacts on child health outcomes are more difficult to establish). In the Western Balkans, Turkey, and Palestine, EU-supported projects delivered tangible benefits to disabled persons, including the mentally ill.

While this is not a health evaluation, it should be kept in mind in considering EU support for universal access to basic health services (one of the components of the Social Protection Floor) that the health sector situation in EU partner countries is highly differentiated. In countries with ex-Soviet style health systems, coverage is good but services have deteriorated. In the poorest partner countries such as Ethiopia and Malawi, access is poor – but much more so in rural regions. In more developed partner countries, such as Turkey, the health transition is seeing concern switch from the health concerns of very poor countries to those of better-off ones, such as chronic and non-communicable disease. In poor countries (and outliers such as Moldova), maternal and child health remains poor; in more developed ones, there has been substantial progress.

EU support has contributed to improvements: in Ethiopia, the Protection of Basic Services programme (co-funded by the EU among other international donors) contributed to the improvement of maternal and child health - the use of ante-natal care increased from 28% to 34% between 2005 and 2011, while the postnatal service coverage increased from 36.2 % to 44.5% over the same period. In almost all countries reviewed, the proportion of health care payments that citizens must make out of pocket remains unacceptably high, the combined effect of insufficient social insurance coverage and poorly functioning health care systems which make informal payments a matter of course.

3.2.3 Access to basic income security strengthened with EU support (JC 23)

There is evidence that EU support to basic income security schemes is helping to alleviate poverty – most IPA beneficiaries excepted.

Basic income security has a long history at the EU. Already prior to the evaluation period, the Food Security Programme and ECHO were providing SP through cash transfers even though they were not labelled as such. The EU has strongly supported basic income security programmes in seven out of fourteen case study countries reviewed – El Salvador (PACSES budget support), Ethiopia (Productive Safety Net Programme), Turkey (Conditional Cash Transfer Programme), Kyrgyzstan (Monthly Social Benefit for Low Income Families), Lesotho (the Child Grant Programme), Malawi (Social Cash Transfer Programme), Moldova (sector budget support for social assistance), Palestine (direct support to the Palestinian Authority through PEGASE), and Paraguay.

Countries where the EU supported major cash transfer social protection programmes were: Ethiopia, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey, Palestine, and Malawi. Many of these programmes have produced documented poverty alleviation impacts. These were, for example, documented in a UNICEF impact assessment in Palestine. The Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia has been evaluated on a regular basis by the International Food Policy Research Institute. In Moldova, with the adoption of a new social assistance system, 71,000 families have become eligible for cash support. In Malawi, the external impact evaluation of SCTP found significant income multiplier effects for beneficiary households.

The EU had no significant programmes to support access to basic income security in IPA beneficiaries, apart from support to a conditional cash transfer programme in Turkey, notable for its gender orientation and extension, with ECHO collaboration, to cover Syrian refugees both inside and outside camps.

There is evidence that EU in-kind transfer programmes are running in some countries.

The EU has also supported in-kind transfer programmes in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Palestine and Paraguay. Again, these have a long history at the EU through the work of the Food Security Programme (FSP) and ECHO. Particularly with the monetisation of the poorest countries – the increased reach of the cash economy – and the increasing availability of ATMs, programmes have moved away from food towards cash. In Ethiopia, however, the Productive Safety Net Programme still retains a significant food component, as does the social assistance programme in Palestine.

Countries such as Kyrgyzstan, which inherited from its Soviet past a system of privileges identifying 38 categories of the population as entitled to subsidies and in-kind assistance such as free transportation, discounted utility bills, free medicines, etc., present a reform challenge. Yet, in 2007-2010 the system was reformed / monetised and replaced by the programme of cash compensations paid to 25 groups of beneficiaries. The EU provided support to this reform and

thus contributed to strengthening basic income security. Similarly, in Moldova, categorical benefits are being replaced with means tests. In Turkey, in-kind benefits are provided to practically all categories of persons in need (old-age, disabled, children, poor families, etc.) but EU support is not involved. The EU has, however, through capacity building at the social security institute, strengthened that institution's ability to advocate for rationalisation of the system. In Ethiopia, resources for implementing the expanded national social protection system will only become available if regressive food, energy, and electricity subsidies are rationalised.

3.2.4 Gender inequalities in social protection coverage reduced (JC 24)

EU has supported quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender equity.

In line with the strengthened emphasis on gender in the Agenda for Change and Europe 2020, in many countries, EU-supported social protection actions contain quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender equity. The EU supported a regional study on gender profiles of the Eastern Partnership countries in late 2013. This study identified main gender challenges present, including, but not limited to, gender inequality on the labour market and absence of national action plans for gender equality. It also pointed out the lack of measurable indicators applicable to areas such as access to education, poverty, health, violence against women, the economic empowerment of women and the representation of women in decision-making processes. Similar analyses have also been supported by EU in individual countries.

In Paraguay, quantitative and qualitative analysis of gender equity is in place. In Ethiopia, a Gender and Social Development impact assessment was conducted and the Productive Safety Net Programme has, since its inception, taken gender aspects into account, e.g. through direct transfers to pregnant and lactating women and provision of child care facilities at public works sites. The EU has produced an in-depth report on gender equality in Turkey emphasising the need to systematically carry out gender mainstreaming within the IPA structures. The EU's report on social protection in Turkey highlighted the need for indicators – particularly in the field of gender equality – to ensure sufficient prioritisation between projects. The EU supported two actions in Turkey with strong gender components, one aimed at keeping girls in school through conditional cash transfers and the other aimed at encouraging new mothers to enter formal employment.

However, the level of gender analysis of SP issues in different countries varies, and there are examples of some other countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, where studies and reports do not contain consistent gender-disaggregated data.

However, while EU-supported interventions frequently benefit women disproportionately, there is no evidence of mainstreaming gender equality.

Social assistance support is gender sensitive in and of itself, because beneficiaries are disproportionately women, for a number of reasons – the elderly are more likely to be female than male, female-headed households are more likely to be impoverished, and females are less likely than males to have participated in or currently participate in the formal economy. In some countries, such as Paraguay, or in IPA beneficiaries, representatives of Gender Agencies or similar governmental bodies participate in consultation processes for drafting programming documents or policies. In Ethiopia, EU has ensured involvement of CSOs working on gender and equity issues in programming and consultations and involvement of women in local works decisions has reportedly increased in the Productive Safety Net Programme context. Work of UN Women and other UN agencies particularly as well as civil society in sampled countries contributes to raising gender as important for

reform agenda, also supported by EU and other international actors. Yet, while gender has been implicitly taken into account in EU SP support because many actions benefit women as well as (or more than) men, European expertise in gender was not fully deployed to mainstream gender into the design and implementation of all interventions.

Despite the absence of an overall mainstreaming strategy, in large part due to the weakness of the overall application of an overall strategic approach to SP programming and implementation, many EU-financed projects in the social protection or wider social inclusion field include measures for empowerment of women (and youth), as well as measures to improve their employability or entrepreneurship skills. For example, Operational Programmes for Human Resource Development in IPA beneficiaries eligible for IPA Component IV Human Resource Development (Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Montenegro) contain priorities related to the increase of employability among women and youth. In Palestine, the Office of the European Union Representative West Bank and Gaza Strip (EUREP), and UNRWA promoted initiatives to strengthen the gender focus of EU cooperation such as an EU-MS gender mapping, development of a local EU gender strategy, establishment of an EU Gender Technical Working Group as a joint forum, and prioritizing women as a priority target group in the thematic programmes (i.e. Non-State Actors, Food Security, EIDHR) and in the EU support for the justice sector and for East Jerusalem.

While there has been a strong effort to meet the needs of children in EU support to social protection, inter-generational equity has not been a prominent theme because the EU has been little involved in social insurance through the instruments evaluated here or, specifically, in pensions.

Many EU-backed cash transfer programmes have conferred special benefits on mothers and children, helping to relieve gender inequality.

The EU has supported cash transfer programmes for mothers and children in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Moldova, Palestine, Paraguay and Turkey. Conditional transfers to mothers have taken place under the Comunidades Solidarias Programme in El Salvador offering a health bonus for children under five and pregnant and lactating women. The programme also provides an education bonus. In Ethiopia, Productive Safety Net Programme III provided direct support grants to pregnant and lactating mothers with insufficient means. In Kyrgyzstan the Monthly Social Benefit (MSB) targeted children with special needs (e.g. infantile cerebral paralysis, HIV/AIDS up to the age of 18 years, children born to mothers with HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities, orphans) though this programme is not linked to welfare status.

The EU has also supported the Child Grant Programme in Lesotho, which has enrolled 20,000 households (50,000 children) since its start. In Moldova, with the adoption of the Law on Social Support drafted with EU assistance a total of 13,165 vulnerable families received support and 80.6% of the applicants were women (2009). In Paraguay, monetary transfers have taken place in the framework of Tekoporã and Abrazo programmes. The EU-financed project “Strengthening the Impact of the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme in Turkey for Increasing High School Attendance” had a positive impact on health. According to an assessment conducted in 2011-2012 the rate of mothers taking their children for regular health checks, which was 63.25%, increased to 74.13% after they started receiving social assistance.

3.3 EQ 3: European approaches and policy dialogues

To what extent has EU cooperation with partner countries and participation in policy dialogues in the social protection field promoted European and international principles and values in that area?



Rationale and coverage of the question

The basic tenets of EU social protection policy are inclusiveness, adequacy, sustainability, good governance, and social dialogue. Regarding particularly the first two, the EU view is that social protection is a universal human right as well as a risk-pooling mechanism. The EU can add value in a number of ways – as a large donor able to support system-wide reforms and strengthening that would be beyond the reach of MSs (see EQ8), in its coordination role (see also EQ8), and as an advocate for European principles and values. This EQ covers the extent to which the EU coordinated its strategy and approach to support SP with EU MS. It asks whether the EU participates effectively in national and regional SP policy dialogues and promotes European and international principles and values in the relevant dialogue platforms. Finally, it examines the EU's role in global fora and the extent to which it coordinated its actions with other major international players in SP – the ILO and UNICEF (the EU's principal international interlocutors on social protection), the World Bank, and, in its role as a fiscal watchdog, the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Summary answer to the evaluation question

The EU participates in national, regional, and global policy dialogues on social protection strategy. Most EUDs have staff designated to deal with social protection, but the extent to which this results in high quality policy dialogue is variable, depending principally on whether there is a national SP policy, but also on the level of staff member interest. As in other policy areas, there is a general absence of technical expertise in SP at EUD level, a significant constraint on bilateral dialogue. EU participation in regional policy dialogue is also variable, being, for example, quite strong in Latin America but less so in the Eastern Neighbourhood and in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is some policy dialogue on social protection in IPA beneficiaries in the course of Enlargement negotiations but this dialogue is not a priority as SP is not explicitly part of the EU *acquis* and national SP policies are lacking.

The EU benefited from EU MSs' expertise by participating in the OECD POVNET (OECD DAC Network on Poverty Reduction) exercise, which led to formation of an informal group of experts who participated in drafting the 2010 European Report on Development (with the focal theme of SP in Africa), subsequently the 2012 Communication, and more recently the 2015 Concept Note No. 4 on social protection and the 2017 Concept Note No. 5 on SP indicators. These networks continue to operate and are expanded through global thematic projects such as SOCIEUX and EU-SPS. However, the first has been under-used because it is essentially demand-driven and country-level advocacy to promote EU expertise has not sufficiently stimulated that demand. The latter has contributed to promoting a strategic view of SP via thematic studies and a comprehensive capacity building approach; however, it is regarded having been implemented to significant degree as a supply-driven project.

While the EU participates in global policy fora, SPIAC-B being the most prominent of these, participating members report that the EU's participation has historically been ineffective, in part due to governance issues – SPIAC-B has evolved into a very informal institution – and lack of EU staff capacity. There has been progress recently, as in the most recent meeting in Algiers, the EU and MS coordinated a joint position. There have, moreover, and while better coordination is needed, been some examples of regional cooperation between EU, ILO and other UN Agencies in programmes dealing with wider social inclusion and protection issues.

At all levels, and in all interventions and countries reviewed, the EU has promoted European values and international principles. This is largely attributable to the uniqueness and internal consistency of the

European Social Model and the European commitment to sustainable social protection systems and social inclusion. EU support to social protection has been coherent with related policies in employment, gender equality, migration, etc. The EU's capacity to project European approaches has increased with current efforts to link social protection to humanitarian assistance, a subject of growing interest in global social protection policy and one where the EU has significant institutional depth in the form of ECHO. At the same time, the demand for EU SP expertise is highly country-dependent and challenges remain in exploiting the SP-humanitarian nexus (e.g., differing objectives, contrasting time frames, and distinct institutional cultures).

3.3.1 EU support to social protection coordinated with EU MS (JC 31)

EU participates in joint programming, but joint programming is still in its early stages.

EU has taken the lead in managing or participating in joint programming, monitoring or other similar initiatives. For example, the EU along with Sweden and Germany engaged in the elaboration of a Joint Country Support Strategy (JCSS) 2007-2010 for Kyrgyzstan. A similar example is visible in Ethiopia. However, a recent evaluation of Joint Programming in all aspects found that, while advancing in strategic and programming terms, Joint Programming is still in its early stages in terms of the number of countries where it is actually being implemented.

Project and programming documents regularly make references to EU MS interventions on social protection.

The case studies show that, when the EU is active in SP, there are systematic references in project and programming documentation to EU MS actions in the area. For instance, project documents underline the fact that the EU budget support programme in El Salvador was closely coordinated with Luxembourg and especially Spain. Belgium, Germany, Ireland participated actively in the PEGASE programme in Palestine. The Lesotho Country Strategy Paper highlights the efforts and priorities of three Member States in social protection-related sectors: Germany, Ireland, and the UK. Both Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) and Protection of Basic Services (PBS) in Ethiopia are examples of effective joint programming. In Malawi, the EU relied on delegated cooperation through KfW because of that institution's long experience of work in the country.

EU MS expertise in SP has been mobilised and regular technical coordination meetings on SP take place.

EU MSs have played a role in the design and implementation of the EU strategic framework in the field of SP. EU MSs participating in the OECD-DAC POVNET group in the 2000s (especially Finland, France, Germany, and the UK) played an instrumental role in drafting the 2010 European Report on Development which focussed on SP in Africa. They subsequently contributed to formulating the 2012 Communication. The modalities and approaches eventually adopted to support SP in partner countries in the post- 2007-13 evaluation period left an important place for EU MSs to play a role in EU external assistance in this area. Since, regular EU/EFTA technical coordination meetings on SP in development cooperation take place, which have so far been organized by the European Commission, Belgium and Germany. The next one will be organized by Sweden. By nature, instruments such as twinning and the SOCIEUX TA facility rely on EU MS expertise. Germany, Spain, and France as implementing partners of SOCIEUX and SOCIEUX+ contributed mobilizing various expertise for EU MS to support partner countries in the frame of the SOCIEUX facility. France has developed a Health and Social Protection sector strategic framework for 2015-2019 where explicit references are made to the role of EU instruments supporting SP globally. The design and implementation of the global thematic EU-SPS programme benefited from the engagement of Finland and Germany. There have been regular contacts, whether through formal or informal mechanisms, between EU MS representatives and DG DEVCO and, to a lesser extent, DG NEAR on SP.

At the same time, twinning and SOCIEUX, as demand-driven approaches, have been underutilised, in part because of insufficient advocacy at the bilateral policy dialogue level. However, according to the preliminary findings of an independent mid-term evaluation, EU-SPS, while it has contributed to a more strategic approach to SP through its country analyses, has drifted from its basic objectives.

3.3.2 EU actively participates and promotes European and international principles and values in national and regional policy dialogues on social protection (JC 32)

EUDs have staff formally designated to support social protection, but the level of country policy dialogue is variable.

The effectiveness of SP policy dialogue depends more on the existence of a coherent national SP sector policy than EUD capacity (although the two are not unrelated and, as mentioned above, the EU is short on technical capacity at EUD level.). El Salvador, Palestine, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Morocco stand out as countries where sector policy dialogue has produced tangible results.

In IPA beneficiaries, where in the countries reviewed there are no national SP policies apart from the inherited pre-transition social insurance policies, policy dialogue occurs within the wider frameworks of issues linked to social inclusion, or within negotiations on closely related areas such as labour law. In many countries reviewed (e.g., Ethiopia, Palestine, Turkey, and others), EUDs have staff designated to cover SP issues, although this is usually part of a broader portfolio. The intensity and quality of the EU's country-level policy dialogue on SP is variable depending on the level of interest of the staff member concerned.

At regional level, SP figured strongly in policy dialogue in Latin America, less so in other regions.

SP policy dialogue is mixed at the regional level. In IPA beneficiaries, there is no evidence of active policy dialogue on SP at the regional level. Eastern Partnership dialogue was structured around six themes, one of which (Platform 2 "Economic Integration and Convergence with EU Policies") indirectly covered SP in relation to the field "Labour Market & Social Policies" and the broad objective of "Supporting inclusive economic development." There has been an attempt to develop a structured dialogue with social partners and civil society on social policies.

Apart from some ad hoc regional seminars, no evidence has been found that there was a strong dialogue specifically focusing on SP at regional level, or of SP being covered by Eastern Partnership summits. In Asia, discussions on SP took place in Central Asia, where SP was a focal sector in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. There was a strong emphasis on SP in Latin America, including in the context of the EU-LAC summits (1999-2010) and EU- Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) summits (post-2010). Dialogue was supported, inter alia, by EUROsocial. In Africa, SP issues were included in dialogue with African Union AU (Joint Africa-EU Strategy /PanAF) in the context of the Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, and with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the context of food security/resilience initiatives. EU support to the AU through PanAF has contributed direct financial support to the Social Affairs Department, which has participated in regional and global social protection fora.

EU support to developing SP systems in line with European values and approaches has increased after the

Extensive international cooperation has taken place since April 2013 through SOCIEUX, active in DCI, ENI, and EDF countries. SOCIEUX provides peer-to-peer TA on demand, usually using European experts but also with a significant South-South element. It is specifically designed as an instrument to act upon the 2012 social protection Communication, encouraging partner countries to

evaluation period..

develop inclusive, nationally owned SP systems taking advantage of European experience in the field. More recently, through the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS), an EU action co-financed with OECD, Finland and Germany, supports eleven low and middle income countries in building sustainable and inclusive social protection systems. The programme is implemented in cooperation with some national and regional authorities, think-tanks and expert institutions. While the preliminary findings of the independent mid-term evaluation raise a number of concerns, EU-SPS has contributed to a more comprehensive and strategic orientation of EU support to SP.

There is good complementarity between SOCIEUX and SPS-EU, with the latter supporting long-term SP development via research and capacity building and the former providing needed short-term expertise. EU-SPS has in all respects emphasised an SP-wide approach; for example, developing tools to analyse fiscal space as well as the incidence of SP costs / benefits and analysing informality in a large sample of countries. Both follow on the European value that SP should be as broad and adequate as possible given reasonable economic considerations, but no broader or more adequate.

EU support to social protection has reflected emerging EU priorities

The EU has tried to achieve policy coherence in social protection. To take migration and social protection as an example, one can cite the focus on children of emigrants in Moldova and scattered small interventions in the area of migrants' social protection rights. In Kyrgyzstan, the links between migration and social protection were well integrated into EU SP support and, in Ethiopia, the potential contribution of Productive Safety Net Programme to discouraging illegal emigration (to Eritrea (with hopes of applying for European asylum claiming Eritrean nationality) has been discussed. In Turkey, the EU has ensured that the cash transfers programme supported is extended to Syrian refugees.

In recent years, there has been an initiative between DG DEVCO and ECHO to develop policies and programmes to integrate humanitarian assistance and social protection. This builds on the Agenda for Change commitment to devote more attention to the needs of fragile and post-conflict states; it also dovetails with the emerging emphasis on migration and its root causes.

Through the PROGRESS programme managed by DG EMPL, active in IPA beneficiaries, the EU was able to encourage coherence between social protection, social inclusion, and economic and employment policies backed by the EU. The 2007-2013 PROGRESS programme provided grants to national and local governments, civil society and think tanks to undertake research in diverse legislative and policy areas concerning industrial recovery, social policy dialogue and employment. The programme continued and the period after 2015 funded participation in seminars and conferences, such as the Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth and the 15th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty.

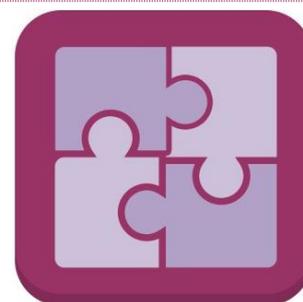
3.3.3 EU effectively participates in global policy dialogues on social protection (JC33)*EU participates in international multilateral fora, but with weak overall contributions.*

EU participation in regional and global policy dialogue relating to social protection strategy happens through EU's active membership in the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) formed at the instigation of the G20 in 2012. SPIAC-B, jointly chaired by World Bank and International Labour Organization, aims to enhance advocacy on social protection issues and coordinate international cooperation. While noting EU's participation in SPIAC-B, stakeholders in interviews, have regretted that the

venue is not living up to its potential effectiveness, essentially due to governance issues. However, while it is true that SPIAC-B is a highly informal institution, the effectiveness of EU participation was also hampered because of the lack of in-house technical capacity relative to major participants. A number of international social protection experts interviewed independently stated that the EU's contribution to global policy dialogue on SP in poor countries has been weak. This is understandable, as the quantity of portfolios managed by EU staff at HQ makes the EU a weak technical partner.

3.4 EQ 4: Social partners and civil society

To what extent has EU support contributed to successfully involving the social partners and civil society, including the private sector and local authorities, in the policy development in the social protection field?



Rationale and coverage of the question

The EU is committed to supporting involvement of the broad range of stakeholders in social protection – typically enumerated as government (at all levels, including local authorities), trade unions, employers' organisations, NGOs/CSOs, and the private sector. Civil society is especially important in advocating for populations with special SP needs, such as women, disabled persons, members of ethnic minority groups, and so on. The private sector is also a major stakeholder, and one playing a growing role in partnerships under Agenda 2030. This EQ largely revolves around dialogue at all levels and the extent to which the EU has supported and participated in it. Social protection is an issue that cuts across sectors, and should figure in policy dialogues related to, for example, trade and migration. NGOs and local authorities and, particularly in the area of actuarial management, the private sector have specialised expertise and should have been involved in setting, implementing, and monitoring policy. Underlying this is the fact that, in all its aspects, SP is a technical field in which practical experience and familiarity with lessons learned over the years play a large role in promoting effectiveness and sustainability. Also for this reason, an important component of supporting the involvement of stakeholders in policy development is encouraging their participation in national and international fora and networks.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

In line with the EU promotion of civil society in its external aid, there has been a trend towards increasing involvement of civil society, with accompanying improvement in capacity. Civil society's (especially NGOs') involvement in design, delivery and monitoring of social protection services has grown stronger over time, with NGOs regularly playing a role as implementing partners, although at a different degree among countries.

By contrast, there is no such trend in the involvement of the social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations), which may reflect the weakness of these institutions as well as that of the EU's ties to them (as compared, for instance, to the ILO's). The fact that the EU focuses on social assistance and inclusion, meaning that target populations are typically in the informal sector or agriculture, explains to some degree the lack of EU involvement with the social partners.

EU support encouraged use of local authority expertise in local needs prioritisation and planning as well as service delivery. Examples are found not only in the Western Balkans where the capacity of local authorities in SP has been systematically strengthened, but also in Palestine and Ethiopia, where the involvement of local authorities and closely associated CSOs in administering cash transfer programmes has increased.

In a few instances, the EU has supported the use of Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) tools which entail a strong participatory dimension. This has been especially the case in recently

launched interventions such as the global EU-SPS programme initiated in 2015, which, among other objectives, aims at testing new approaches to the assessment of social protection systems. EU-SPS has promoted the application of tools developed by the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment tools previously developed under SPIAC-B. At the same time, it has not met the original expectation that it would be a leading actor developing new ISPA tools.

Regional networks of social protection stakeholders have been supported by the EU in Latin America and Africa, and have encouraged exchanges of experiences and good practices. In general, however, more attention could have been given to regional exchanged of expertise in view of the highly regional nature of shared SP challenges and approaches.

There is very limited private sector involvement in EU policy dialogue in social protection. This is largely because the EU has focused on social assistance, not social insurance aspects, of SP.

3.4.1 Increased participation of social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations), civil society, and private sector in national dialogue on social protection (JC 41)

Involvement of civil society and local authorities has increased in SP. While no specific approach can be identified, EU support contributed to this.

In almost all countries reviewed, the EU has supported growing involvement of civil society in SP, usually with positive results. In Moldova, civil society has been involved in policy design and service delivery. Local authorities have been close partners in decentralisation of SP, but decentralisation of financial resources has not kept pace with decentralisation of responsibilities. In former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well, civil society and local authorities were active in the effort to de-institutionalise and provide services to children.

The role of civil society in the Ethiopian PSNP programme has consistently increased over time from its initial low level, and local community boards now participate in the process of deciding eligibility. Progress in involving civil society must also, however, in Ethiopia as well as in Turkey, be placed in a larger context of shrinking space in the recent political environment. Community groups also participate in selecting beneficiaries of the cash transfer programme in Palestine, an involvement that has been encouraged by EU-financed TA.

In some cases, the EU financed actions implemented by the ILO. This was the case in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where ILO implemented a project to support social dialogue. There is one case where there was clear promotion of tripartite national dialogue - unions, employers and government - by programmes related to social protection. This was El Salvador, where EU contributed to the participation of social partners, civil society, and the private sector in national social dialogue on social protection through the support to the Economic and Social Council. The work of the Economic and Social Council (ESC) resulted in a national social protection strategy – however, the ESC eventually ceased to function, indicating a lack of sustainability. In Paraguay, the EU has helped improve participatory process by supporting a social dialogue platform with government, social partners and civil society in the framework of the National Team for Country Strategy.

In Malawi, the EU involved civil society in policy development related to SP through, for instance, supporting national dialogue platforms and actively involving civil society in the pilot-testing of innovative tools. In all of the Western Balkan countries, CSOs and local authorities were involved in designing local social protection strategies and delivering services.

A national dialogue around SP issues with social partners and civil society has been strengthened only in a

However, involvement of the social partners and civil society has been uneven. The 2011 thematic evaluation of EU support to Employment and Social Protection found that the EU had been relatively weak in supporting the social partners (employers' organisations and trade unions) to resolve issues through dialogue. This is perhaps not surprising since the EU lacks the

few cases where the conditions were right.

institutional ties of the International Labour Organization (through that organisation's tripartite structure) in this domain.

However, in some countries, support has been given to national dialogues with both social partners and civil society through specific projects. In Ukraine, there was a project to promote policy dialogue between CSOs and executive authorities on administrative services to persons with intellectual disabilities. In Azerbaijan, the EUD launched two calls for proposals concerning the involvement of non-state actors in policy dialogue in the field of social protection. No specific evidence on national dialogue being promoted has been found for Montenegro (apart from engagement in the working group on Chapter 19), Ethiopia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In general, EU thematic and regional instruments could more effectively permit stakeholders to participate in regional and global dialogues.

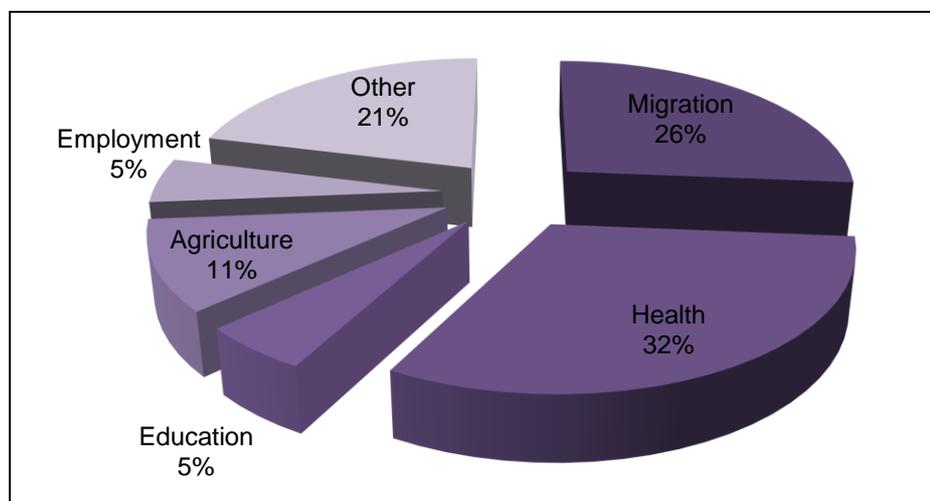
The EU's contribution to building capacity of social partners and CSOs to engage in national social dialogue was mixed.

Even when capacity building for social dialogue was not explicit in EU support for SP, the growing involvement of civil society described above had a learning-by-doing element. In four countries reviewed, the EU supported projects specifically related to capacity building for social dialogue and/or strengthening social partners: In Turkey, the EU implemented the Project "Dialogue between trade unions organisations in Turkey with a focus on young workers." In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the EU/ILO project on promoting social dialogue tackled the capacities of social partners to participate, inter alia, in social protection policy dialogue. In Kosovo, the EU supported social partners through a project focusing on capacity building to participate in dialogue – reportedly with only limited impact due to the weakness of trade unions in Kosovo. While actual impacts on capacity to engage in SP policy making and service delivery were found in the Western Balkans, these did not necessarily extend to social dialogue. A direct relationship between EU support to social dialogue/social partners and capacity to engage in dialogue on social protection has been found in El Salvador under the EUROsocial programme.

Social protection is mainstreamed in policy dialogue, in some cases related to broader policy dialogues on regional integration.

In candidate and potential candidate countries, the EU seeks to enhance employment and social policies. Within the accession process, the Commission holds policy dialogue and assesses each year the progress of candidates/potential candidates on issues of employment and social policies, among other areas of concern of EU. Negotiation on these issues are conducted with candidate countries within the framework of Chapter 19, as they move towards the EU membership. As reflected in the EUD Survey, social protection has been mainly mainstreamed in policy dialogue related to health and migration sectors in some of the countries analysed (see Figure below).

Figure 7 Between 2007 and 2013, sector policy dialogues in which SP has been mainstreamed between 2007 and 2013



Base: EUDs (n=32). Source: Survey analysis, *Particip* (2017).

In Latin America and Central America, EU policy dialogue on SP is linked to a broader policy dialogue on regional integration. Examples are Paraguay – a member of Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market) MERCOSUR, which includes agreements to recognize the pension rights of migrant workers – and El Salvador, a member of the Central American region. The youthful population in El Salvador is heavily affected by migration and has benefited from EU support to promote social inclusion. In this country, migration was an area of concern under the Country Strategy Paper (CSP), as it was in Azerbaijan, where the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement set out priorities to be pursued in migration, including development of a sustainable national asylum/protection system in line with international standards. As evidenced by the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership 2008-2011, in all EU policy dialogues with Moldova, migration has been an important topic because of the magnitude of Moldovan migration to Europe. The main impetus for EU support to cash family transfers in Moldova was concern over the large number of children left behind when their parents migrate to Europe. In Lesotho, SP was not mainstreamed in other sector policy dialogues; however, the EU promoted dialogue with the South African government regarding the protection of Basotho migrant workers. In Ukraine, the EU financed a number of actions dealing with SP of migrants and refugees / asylum seekers. No other unequivocal evidence of mainstreaming of SP in other policies has emerged in the country cases.

3.4.2 EU support encourages use of NGO, local authority, and private sector expertise in policy aspects of service design and delivery under supported reforms (JC 42)

EU support encouraged use of local authority expertise in aspects of service design and delivery.

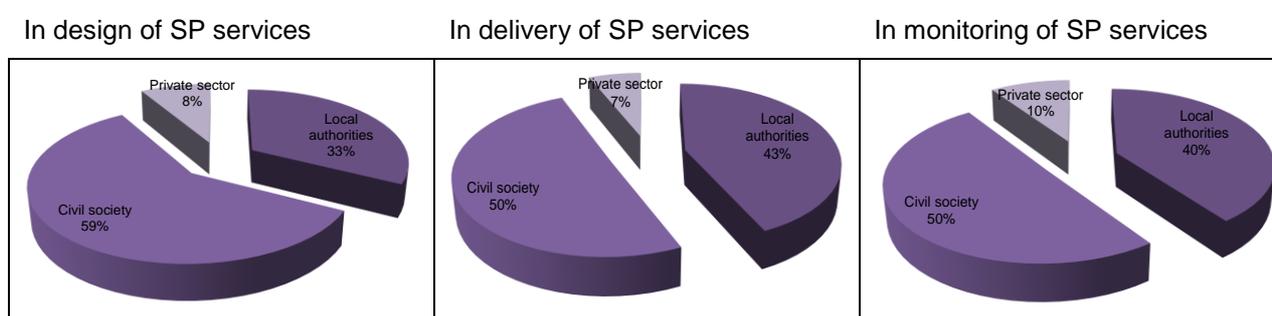
EU support encouraged use of local authority expertise in policy aspects of service design and delivery. In IPA beneficiaries, the EU was involved in strengthening outreach to remote and vulnerable populations, i.e. social inclusion. In Montenegro and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, EU actions encouraged establishment of Local Plans for Social Inclusion and local services were implemented, albeit with varying degree of success as judged by external evaluations. In Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU invested in capacity building of local authorities and local service providers to enhance services for most vulnerable groups. In many communities, services were improved for groups such as children with special needs, elderly, persons with disabilities, aged widows, and members of ethnic minority groups. In El Salvador *Ciudad Mujer* is an example of strong involvement of local providers (NGOs) and authorities. However, EU-supported reforms to

strengthen local authorities' delivery of social assistance were generally hampered by governments' tendency to decentralise responsibilities but not fiscal resources; an example is Moldova. In Kyrgyzstan, the EU-supported a decentralisation process in the field of child protection strengthened involvement at rayon and municipal level.

There is no private sector involvement in policy dialogue in SP.

Involvement of the private sector in policy aspects of service design and delivery has been almost inexistent under EU SP support. This is, in large part, because the EU is not much involved in social insurance and SP of those in formal sector employment. NGOs' involvement in design, delivery and monitoring of SP services is stronger, with NGOs playing a role as implementing partners in some cases, although in varying degree among countries. An analysis of the EUD Survey has also confirmed this finding (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8 *Extent to which the EU has advocated for the involvement of social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and other stakeholders in reforms in SP between 2007 and 2013*



Base: EUDs (n=31). Source: Survey analysis, *Particip* (2017).

Under its budget support interventions EU has advocated for the involvement of CSOs in the design, delivery and monitoring of social protection services. In El Salvador, some instances of NGOs' involvement were found in specific components of the Rural Solidarity Communities programme. In Paraguay, the EUD advocated for NGOs' involvement in monitoring, with results not known at this stage. Growing NGO involvement in the Western Balkans, Palestine, Ethiopia, and Malawi have been described above. However, a general qualification is in order: while the EU is promoting the participation of NGOs, its primary objective is to increase government ownership and commitment to SP, including the possibility to implement programmes through government systems whenever possible (without creating unnecessary parallel structures).

NGOs' involvement in design, delivery and monitoring of social protection services has grown stronger, with NGOs playing a role as implementing partners in some cases.

In some cases (e.g., Kyrgyzstan and El Salvador), NGOs have been involved in the elaboration of national social protection strategies, but these strategies are all post-evaluation period (2007-13). In Kyrgyzstan, for example, the EU includes the strengthening of CSOs' capacity as a specific objective in view of the planned phasing out of EU support to SP. In El Salvador, the new budget support programme (2014-2020) provides for assistance to civil society to help them make use of the social-oversight/social-audit mechanisms foreseen by the Law on Development and Social Protection.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MoLSD) drafted in 2008 a Law on Purchase of Social Services that allows outsourcing of the provision of certain social services to non-government providers on a contractual basis. The MoLSD outsourced the implementation of seven "pilot" social services under the Social Services Action Plan 2014-2016 to

NGOs/CSOs but CSOs' capacity has proven to be very limited for the design and provision of services, despite the fact that they continue to be engaged.

3.4.3 Social partners' and other stakeholders' involvement in policy development in line with national / regional / global social dialogue context has been encouraged by EU (JC 43)

CSO involvement in EU-supported SP interventions has been generally increased, while that of social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) has not.

There has been a general trend towards a more active involvement of CSOs in EU-supported policy development events in SP. This phenomenon is linked to the increased importance assigned to civil society involvement in EU support, reflected in many cases by the development of Civil Society Roadmaps. In Ukraine, for instance, the first civil society mapping exercise took place in 2009 and was used in the preparation of the EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in 2014. The extent to which this general trend includes social partners – trade unions and employer's organizations – is, however, unclear.

CSOs were usually consulted at the programming phase of EU-supported SP interventions. In Kyrgyzstan, in contrast, CSOs were involved in the elaboration of the Strategy for the Development of Social Protection (2012-2014) and their participation triggered a shift in the way that SP is conceived. In El Salvador, the Economic and Social Council supported by the EU provided the framework for bringing stakeholders together in elaboration of the national social protection plan.

In the IPA region, the EU encouraged a greater presence of CSOs to align with the EU standards. In Turkey, the first objective of Guiding Principles for EC Support of the Development of Civil Society in Turkey 2011-2015 ("Improvement of the environment for active citizenship") included a specific activity ("Administrative practices promoting effective civic participation in local, regional and national-level policy processes") aimed at increasing Civil Society Organization (CSO) involvement in policy making. In the Latin American region, the EU has successfully encouraged social partners and other stakeholders' involvement in social protection policy development in the framework of the EUROsociAL programme.

Involvement of the social partners, in the form of employers' and trade unions' involvement, has been weaker. Several reasons account for this. One, already mentioned, is that the EU lacks structural governance ties with such groups. A second is that in many EU partner countries, such organisations are very weak. Third, and probably most important, these organisations represent the formal sector; meaning that they are largely irrelevant from the point of view of the fight against poverty and social exclusion. In addition, the small size of the formal sector in most countries restricts the potential membership of trade unions. In the post-Soviet countries trade union membership numbers have collapsed. A few counter-examples have been cited above.

Regional networks of social protection stakeholders have been supported by the EU in Latin America, encouraging exchanges of experiences and good practices.

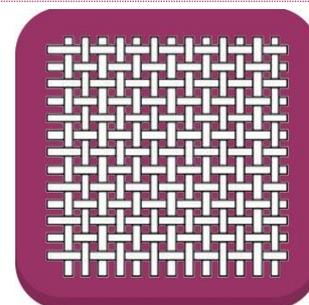
Some examples have been found of regional networks of social protection stakeholders supported by the EU. In Central America, under the Programme to Support Central American Regional Integration (PAIRCA), there have been exchanges of experiences and good practices to contribute to the strengthening of social protection systems, although regional ownership is considered low on the side of PAIRCA. In Latin America, under the EUROsociAL programme, South-South cooperation has been successfully promoted and regional networks of social protection stakeholders have been supported. In that framework, officials from the Ministry of Government and Territorial Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency of El Salvador undertook an exchange

visit to Paraguay to learn about the overall functioning of the Tekopora programme in Paraguay.

In Africa, the EU has been somewhat involved in the regional policy dialogue on social protection in the context of the partnership with the Africa Union. More specifically, the Thematic partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME) covered two priority initiatives (Initiative 6 on Decent Work and on Initiative 8 on Regional and sub-regional fora on employment, labour, social protection and labour migration) which directly supported experience sharing, discussions on shared policy frameworks and capacity development at regional level. The EU has supported regular meetings of African social protection experts, as well as the coordinating work of the Department of Social Affairs at AU HQ in Addis Ababa.

3.5 EQ 5: Social protection systems

To what extent has EU support contributed to sustainable improvements in social protection systems?



Rationale and coverage of the question

A key concern in the EU's SP policy is that programmes are financially sustainable with reasonably foreseeable national resources. This concern has motivated many policy analyses of SP in partner countries and, for example, underpins the ILO's social budgeting approach, which seeks to identify fiscal space for SP programmes. This EQ asks whether EU support has resulted in tangible improvements in SP systems that are likely to be fiscally and institutionally sustainable in the future. Therefore, it probes whether sound actuarial and economic analysis has gone into the design of EU-supported reforms. Problems of identification and affiliation of beneficiaries, necessary for both effectiveness and sustainability, are covered, as are issues of SP administration and implementation. On the institutional side, the EQ covers the appropriateness of capacity development measures and whether EU support has addressed governance issues. As the EU has endorsed the ILO's SP for All initiative adopted by the International Labour Conference of 2012, the EQ asks whether the EU has advocated for the International Labour Organization approach in its dialogue with governments and whether it coordinates with ILO country and regional offices. Finally, it asks whether EU support has contributed to consolidation, coordination, and universalisation of SP in partner countries.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

The EU's support to SP has usually involved capacity building and, in some cases, has been specifically devoted to it. Some of this has involved supporting staff in post, raising the issue of planning for sustainability. The EU has supported significant institutional reforms in the form of reorganisation at all levels, usually in one specific domain, e.g. child protection or tackling income poverty. In interventions aimed at reducing social exclusion, often at local level, EU-supported actions have taken financial and institutional sustainability issues into account. Political economy considerations have limited the EU's ability to tackle, through consolidation and monetisation, the tangle of categorical benefits characteristic not only of countries with a Soviet heritage, but many others, as well – yet this is crucial to promoting efficiency, sustainability, and equity. The fiscal implications and sustainability of specific reforms the EU supports have generally been analysed. Poverty impacts have been estimated, both via baseline situation studies and the analysis of proposed reforms, as well as impact studies. Sustainability of reforms is very much a country-specific issue – some of the EU-supported programmes reviewed (e.g., Palestine, Malawi) are either totally or largely donor-dependent; some (e.g., child protection reforms in

Moldova and Kyrgyzstan; broad SP reform in El Salvador) show signs of moderate sustainability; some (e.g., social inclusion projects in the Western Balkans) depend largely on political will but can at best be called marginally sustainable, in part because of the project approach used.

Taken from a system-wide perspective, the major policy initiative of current interest is the ILO's Social Protection Floor. The EU's policy commitment to the SPF dates from 2012 and, among countries considered here, only three have formally committed themselves to it. The EU has a high-level strategic alliance with the ILO and its SP policies are broadly consistent with the SPF approach. The EU's greatest contribution to advocacy for the SPF approach was its 2012 Communication. The process of identifying individual SPF components (basic minimum income, universal access to basic health care, etc.) that are priority areas for governments and concentrating EU assistance on these areas is coherent with the EU's commitment to the SPF (as well as with the ILO's pragmatic approach). However, despite scattered examples of cooperation, at field level, the EU's relations with country ILO offices and their strategies has been found to be weak. Somewhat contrary to what political economy would predict, more concrete examples of collaboration with the World Bank on improved targeting have been found than concrete examples of EU-ILO cooperation.

While the EU's SP support is broadly consistent with a rights-based approach, and thus universality – e.g. its support for the fight against social exclusion, its support for universal access to basic health care – it has combined this with support for better targeted SP programmes, particularly in income support, to promote anti-poverty efficiency and equity, as well as financial sustainability. Only one example has been found of support to a truly universal programme (a social pension available to all citizens over 70 in El Salvador), and one of the policy priorities identified in a number of countries has been the need to reduce the number of regressive categorical SP programmes, sometimes addressed with success (health care in Turkey), sometimes not (Ethiopia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan).

In sum, the EU's actions have contributed towards sustainable improvements to social protection schemes. However, in most cases examined, sustainability in the sense of full transition from donor to national finance – despite significant national contributions in many cases – remains a distant goal.

3.5.1 Selected types of social protection schemes reformed / modernized / strengthened institutionally and financially (JC 51)

In most actions, the EU has helped strengthen institutions, and some actions have been exclusively devoted to it. Financial implications of reform have generally been analysed.

Most EU actions strengthened institutions through capacity building, institutional reorganisation and reform, the design of better targeting mechanisms, and improvements in procedures. In Ethiopia, EU support for the Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) involved trainings, equipment, staff salaries, etc. at the relevant ministries -- Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance. At later stages, there was also capacity building at local level. The Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance has been supported in developing a comprehensive national social protection strategy with the PSNP at its core. EU-SPS experts have supported the government in performing fiscal space and incidence analysis. In countries such as Lesotho and Moldova, capacity building included the financing of posts in the decentralized social services. In Lesotho, Ministry standard operating procedures and protocols were developed with EU support. In Moldova, the institutional structure for child protection was extensively revamped, targeting mechanisms were improved, and fiscal implications were thoroughly analysed. In Ukraine, EU actions built the capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to engage in policy analysis and supported both capacity building and analysis of legislative and governance issues in the area of disability.

Reform in social services policy formulation and delivery has been supported through capacity building in responsible ministries. In Morocco, the EU has supported all the national institutions responsible for health care finance to broaden coverage, resulting in the Regime d'Assistance Médicale pour les Économiquement Démunis (RAMED) health care system for the poor and the

proposed expansion of social insurance health coverage to the self-employed and students. In both areas, significant strides have been taken, but concerns are also emerging regarding financial sustainability. In the Western Balkans, local provision of social services for excluded populations was broadly strengthened, as it was in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. In Palestine and Ethiopia, local CSO involvement in SP has been strengthened.

Two major EU programmes were entirely devoted to capacity building.

- “Technical assistance to improve and develop the social protection system in the Palestine through partnership planning and institutional capacity building” aimed simultaneously to strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian Authority for policy design and of the Ministry of Social Affairs [now Ministry of Social Development] for policy implementation. The result has been the development of a comprehensive national social protection plan encompassing social assistance, economic empowerment, and social insurance. TA provided has strengthened Ministry’s ability to reach vulnerable individuals who might previously have been overlooked by the SP system, to decentralise to local level, and (with rather less success to date) to improve M&E. However, SP in Palestine remains completely donor-dependent, and sustainability given the current political and security impasse is a distant goal.
- In Turkey, “Strengthening Institutional Capacity of Centre for Labour and Social Security (ÇASGEM), based on an institutional audit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, provided a comprehensive training package (new modules, training of instructors, increase in the frequency of trainings and number of participants), all with an emphasis on increasing conformity with EU labour and social policies. The result was that the Turkish social security institute (the SKG) was able to take on a policy analysis and development role that had previously been beyond its reach.

There have been actions to improve targeting and fight social exclusion, but these have mostly involved specific target groups, not revamping of social protection as a whole.

EU support to institutions improved targeting (e.g., Palestine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Malawi) and outreach to specific excluded populations (Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Examples of EU support to large, integrated efforts strengthening the entire bundle of classic social protection functions -- identification, affiliation, payments, etc. include Palestine (the Cash Transfer Programme) and Ethiopia (the PSNP). These large, costly, system-wide interventions require integrated information systems, development of databases and IT, good capacity at local level, etc., to all of which EU support has contributed. EU support to the Turkish Cash Transfer Programme supported by the EU has also contributed to strengthening in these dimensions. Despite the ambitious nature of some of these actions, they are nonetheless pointed at particular groups and particular types of protection: income poverty reduction in Palestine, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Turkey; health coverage in Morocco. A number of interventions have specifically strengthened the institutions and systems covering children (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan). Selected types of social protection schemes have been reformed, strengthened, and modernized, but an overall strategic approach has been lacking at country level. As has been noted elsewhere, the EU has mostly left to other institutions the task of reforming social insurance systems. An exception is El Salvador, a county with a well-established Bismarckian social insurance tradition that has adopted the SPF

model, and is taking a holistic view of social protection that goes well beyond alleviating income poverty.

This is the result of many factors: the immediate poverty reduction motive that is at the core of the EU's support to social protection, lack of technical capacity specialised in SP, the relatively weak EU policy mandate in SP prior to the 2012 Communication, and the fact that financial resources for SP were modest – not least of all because national requests in many countries were small. One EU intervention that has incorporated the system-wide view is EU-SPS. It provides analytical expertise and research in, inter alia, fiscal space analysis, mapping the informal sector, and universal health care, with different national foci.

Some EU actions tackled governance issues of transparency and accountability, but the crucial component of M&E was variable.

The governance issues in social protection are multiple but can, in the present context, be boiled down to transparency and accountability, with a strong central-vs.-local component (e.g., local authorities being invested with responsibilities but not resources). Decentralization reforms can contain perverse incentives. An example is the interaction between the decentralization and deinstitutionalization programmes in Moldova, where the local government is now responsible for financing services to the needy, and has an incentive to institutionalize, because institutionalized persons are funded by the national government. In general, decentralisation of responsibilities is too seldom accompanied by decentralisation of needed resources. Challenges include the need to coordinate multiple levels of government and the fact that responsibility for social protection is often scattered over multiple ministries and agencies, each with its own turf to protect. There were exceptions: in Ethiopia, EU support contained a strong governance component; sector budget support in Kyrgyzstan improved the internal audit function at the Ministry of Social Protection and TA for PFM at the Ministry of Finance was complementary.

M&E has been variable. An outstanding example of strong M&E is the PSNP project in Ethiopia, which has been regularly monitored by the International Food Policy Research Institute since its inception. Other examples of strong impact analysis include UNICEF's assessment of EU support's impact on children in Palestine and an independent assessment of the cash transfer programme in Malawi. Budget support to SP in Kyrgyzstan was regularly monitored. Yet there have been examples where M&E was inadequate. For example, the Palestine Cash Transfer Programme, despite EU technical support in M&E, continues to be monitored based on an overly detailed and ambitious set of indicators.

3.5.2 Nationally defined social protection floors promoted (JC 52)

Since the 2012 Communication, the EU is committed to promoting the ILO's SPF approach.

The EU cooperates with International Labour Organization at country and regional level in various fields: employment, social policy, equal opportunities, social dimension of globalization, decent work, etc. The formal cooperation framework dating from May 2001 included policy areas such as EU enlargement, trade and development and external assistance. This was followed in 2004 by the ILO-EU strategic partnership in the field of development, which has led as from 2005 to a progressive recognition of employment, social dialogue, social protection and rights at work in the EU programming of external assistance. The EU's 2012 Communication on social protection in EU External Support refers to the ILO's Social Protection Floors (SPF) Recommendation (No. 202). The increased attention to SP in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the EU's strengthened

commitment to SP (e.g. the emerging EU Pillar of Social Rights covering access to SP) have been factors reinforcing the tendency to increase the EU's involvement in SP in external cooperation.

The EU's SP cooperation is generally coherent with the ILO approach.

The EU was involved in the process leading to the ILO's Recommendation No. 202, which can be considered as part of a package including the 2012 EU Communication in view of the two documents' proximity (a matter of weeks). The EU's adoption of its 2012 Communication on Social Protection represents a significant act of advocacy for the approach. The EU social protection Concept Paper #4 of 2015 essentially packages the SPF approach in a user-friendly document filled with figures, text boxes, etc. There have been EU-financed analytical / feasibility studies of the SPF in ten countries in Africa and, especially in Asia. The EU supported one multi-country SPF costing study, covering Burkina Faso, El Salvador, and Cambodia. Experience to date has consisted largely of countries prioritising one aspect of the SPF and developing it; the ILO position (an informal one) is that, while over time, the package as a whole should be adopted, an incremental approach is acceptable. As a general proposition, EU support for universal access to basic health care, social assistance (cash and in-kind transfers, whether categorical or conditional), as well as its efforts to reduce social exclusion, are consistent with the SPF approach. So, too can, e.g., the EU TA which informed financial analysis of the proposed increase of the Guaranteed Minimum Income in Kyrgyzstan.

The only case study countries where the SPF has been adopted as the basis for SP policy are Lesotho, El Salvador, and Paraguay. While the EU supported the SPF in these cases and there are examples of other EU cooperation with the ILO, in general, the relationship at field level between the ILO and EU has been found to be weak. There are counter-examples – EU-ILO work on migration and human trafficking in Moldova and a regional project on strengthening social dialogue in the Western Balkans.

3.5.3 Fiscal implications of EU-supported social protection schemes, including redistributive effects and transition to sustainable national financing, considered (JC 53)

Analytical work supported by the EU was for the most part non-technical from an actuarial and economic point of view, although it did include cost and fiscal sustainability estimates.

In many settings where the EU supported social protection, formal actuarial analysis of existing social insurance schemes was not part of EU support, because such schemes apply only to a small segment of the population and have little poverty impact. Analysis of such schemes, not only actuarial, but in terms of design, legal basis, etc., is typically provided by the International Labour Organization or World Bank in the form of technical assistance missions. On the other hand, the EU often supported more general poverty, fiscal impact, and sustainability analysis, for example in the case of EU-SPS technical analysis of social protection in Ethiopia and Kyrgyzstan. Current Ethiopia programming is based on an analysis indicating that it should be possible to transition PSNP to national financing in ten years. In Moldova, financial analyses of various scenarios for the reform of the social assistance system were incorporated in a broader institutional and social analysis.

In Palestine, the PEGASE project included technical assistance to cost out the impacts of improved targeting mechanisms as well as analysis of fiscal impacts for the longer term. In Lesotho, the EU financed UNICEF to carry out a fiscal sustainability analysis of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) programme, which in fact offers a rare example of a donor-financed social protection programme that has successfully made the transition to full national financing. In Moldova, the EU supported a rigorous poverty impact analysis of

the cash transfer programme.

Sustainability of reforms supported by the EU is generally taken into account, but not yet achieved.

A number of EU actions took the transition to sustainability into account, although only in Lesotho was an actual phasing-out of donor support and phasing-in of government finance accomplished. In Ethiopia, the PSNP has steadily evolved, from its inception as an emergency humanitarian food intervention, to being the centrepiece of a gradually developing comprehensive national social protection programme. Government contributions are scheduled to increase with, as stated above, full national financing foreseen within ten years. In Kyrgyzstan, it is not clear that improvements in social protection achieved with EU budget support and associated TA are sustainable. However, the new sector budget support programme that commenced in 2014 explicitly aims at phasing out direct EU support to SP, subsuming this under support to rural development instead. The sustainability of the Moldovan social protection system was strengthened by EU support, which led to improvements in targeting approaches and, as a result, more protection at lower cost.

In general, the extent to which EU-financed programmes are likely to continue producing effects after the end of EU funding depends on political commitment. In Lesotho, for example, the programme to ensure cash transfers to families caring for OVCs proved politically popular to the extent that allowing it to lapse would have produced an outcry. In Malawi, which has traditionally enjoyed an abundance of donor support, there is little likelihood that Government will be willing to take over the SCTP programme. In the Western Balkans, due attention was given to local-level sustainability of social inclusion projects. In general, improving sustainability would require greater attention to political economy aspects – e.g., the weakness of “social” ministries and agencies as compared to “hard” ones like Finance, Economy, and Rural Development. The weakness of decentralised agencies and local authorities as compared to central administration would need to be more seriously addressed. In general (apart from exceptions such as Ethiopia), the EU analysed the sustainability of components of social protection but not of the social protection systems as a whole.

Most EU actions carried out redistribution (e.g., poverty impact analyses) and, in some cases, regular monitoring systems were put in place.

A basic contribution to poverty and distributional analysis was the EU's series of country studies *Social Protection and Inclusion* dating from 2009. These presented basic demographic, social, and economic data with an emphasis on social protection and poverty and made a diagnosis of the major problems with the existing social protection system. These served in a number of cases as the foundation for subsequent EU support to social protection. In most countries reviewed – El Salvador, Moldova, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, and others, there has been at least some analysis of poverty and, less often, distributional impacts of the social protection system and proposed reforms. In Kyrgyzstan, there were regular impact and monitoring reports since 2009. The poverty impacts of PSNP have been regularly analysed in Ethiopia and a poverty impact assessment of the SCTP in Malawi was supported. UNICEF performed a significant impact analysis of the Cash Transfer Programme in Palestine. In Lesotho, a monitoring system was introduced in 2012. The Western Balkans are again an exception, because EU support there was so concentrated on reaching specific excluded and marginalized populations, with little impact on overall poverty or the overall income distribution.

3.5.4 Government social protection programmes consolidated and rationalized where necessary (JC 54)

EU programmes have contributed to strengthening social protection institutions in most countries, but have not always succeeded in consolidation and rationalisation.

The EU has contributed to the strengthening of social protection institutions by consolidation and rationalisation in some, but not means all, countries. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a particularly complex institutional structure, the Social Protection and Inclusion System (SPIS) project worked on institutional reform at all governance levels, with greater success at local than state level. In countries with a Soviet heritage (Moldova and Kyrgyzstan among countries visited during this evaluation), it has proven difficult to dismantle and consolidate the multitude of categorical benefits (for veterans, persons retired from specific professions, etc.), yet this is necessary both to ensure efficiency / sustainability and improve equity. In Turkey, despite EU contributions, there is no evidence of consolidation or rationalization of the web of categorical benefits, whose consolidation would greatly facilitate social protection reform. However, the Health Transformation programme in that country has succeeded in abolishing occupational status-based inequalities in access to health care services through unification of all public health insurance schemes to a single, compulsory one and equalising benefit packages for all those insured publicly. In Ethiopia, EU-SPS and other analysts have concluded that a pre-requisite for expanding social protection as envisaged by the recent national policy will be dismantling the current regressive system of energy, electricity, and food subsidies.

Overall, the EU has included institutional reorganisations and reforms in the majority of its initiatives to promote the consolidation and sustainability of programmes. In those countries where EU funds for social protection have been channelled through budget support, such as in Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, programmes have been complemented by TA having a positive impact on national agencies and structures. Also in Palestine, in late 2009 the EU launched a three-year TA project to further support the Ministry of Social Affairs in institutional and administrative development as well as development and implementation of social protection systems. This has resulted in improved policy making but has, to date, lagged behind in achieving needed reforms of the M&E system for social protection. However, in recent years, progress has been made in the form of a Results Oriented Framework formalising the expected impacts of EU support to SP.

EU support has also contributed to the creation of new SP institutions or the reorganisation of the old ones (e.g. Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Moldova, and Montenegro). For instance, in Kyrgyzstan, the former Agency of Social Welfare (ASW) was replaced by a Ministry of Social Protection (MoSP) established in 2011 and again reorganised into the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) which included a Child Protection Department and a Social Assistance Department. In Lesotho, EU support with UNICEF technical cooperation led to the emergence of the Ministry of Social Development. In Moldova, the EU contributed to the reform of the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child as well as the National Social Insurance House at the central level, and to the reorganisation of regional branches of National Social Insurance House (NSIH) and the Sections of Social Assistance and Family Protection at the local level. In Ukraine, the EU contributed to the improvement of organisational structures within the Ministry of Social Policy, related departments and regional administrations in charge of delivering social assistance services. In Montenegro, an Institute for Social and Child Protection was established.

National SP coordination

Evidence shows that coordination has been improved across SP agencies in at least ten countries reviewed (Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador,

mechanisms have been improved (or established) in most countries with EU support.

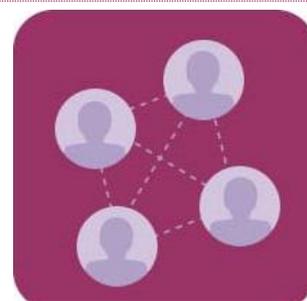
Ethiopia, Lesotho, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Palestine, Paraguay and Ukraine). In Paraguay, one of the main goals of the Saso Pyahu programme was to improve the coordination and management of all institutions responsible for different social services. Contrarily, in Kyrgyzstan, despite the establishment of coordination mechanisms such as the Development Partners Coordination Council (DPCC) Working Group on Social and Child Protection, co-chaired by the EU and UNICEF, and interagency working groups whose aim was to improve social assistance Monthly Benefit for Poor Families (MBPF) targeting and coordinate the implementation of the Optimisation Plan for the Management and Financing of Childcare Institutions, coordination between ministries has only marginally improved. Lack of consensus, coordination and long-term vision has delayed the transition towards a more integrated and sustainable SP system. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development lack agreement as to the deinstitutionalization plan, both due to absence of other services and a social bias in favour of institutionalization for special needs children. There is also a lack of consensus on transforming the legal protection of children from a punitive to a preventative approach and on the rights of internal migrants – many children lack documentation and cannot access services. Finally, there is lack of consensus on the approach to poverty – while some advocate better targeting, others prefer a universal benefit. A universal benefit law has been adopted and it remains to be seen if it will be affordable.

The EU has supported “better targeted” rather than universal approaches.

Overall, the EU has encouraged or supported not so much universal approaches but rather better targeting, thus concentrating on vulnerable groups and those most in need. In addition to Kyrgyzstan, which has just moved towards universality, the only country studied which has implemented a universal programme is El Salvador, with its universal minimum social pension for persons above 70. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, concerns have been voiced that the move to universality may dilute the poverty impact of the programme.

3.6 EQ 6: Social exclusion – impact

To what extent has EU support to social protection contributed to reducing social exclusion and, finally, poverty?



Rationale and coverage of the question

In addition to poor coverage, many SP programmes are inadequate in the level of support provided. In successful social protection systems, benefits are predictable and contribute to poverty reduction and income security throughout the life cycle while meeting equity tests and contributing to economic activity by allowing participants to manage social risks. While EQ2 looked at SP coverage, this EQ examines adequacy, which can be achieved only through a rights-based approach. It looks at how effectively the EU has incorporated such approaches in its strategies at all levels, both globally and at country level and advocated for them in international fora. It also looks at how the EU has mainstreamed the needs of women, children, disabled persons, and ethnic minorities into its SP support. Available data are used to examine trends in SP benefits relative to benchmarks such as the average wage, as well as trends in social expenditure on various classes of beneficiaries. A major cause of social exclusion is “falling through the cracks,” which can occur when social protection programmes are administratively atomised.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

In 2012, the European Council published the *Council conclusions on Social Protection in European Union Development Cooperation*. In this document, the Council calls the European Union to intensify its efforts to enhance the capacity of poor and vulnerable groups to escape from poverty and to better cope with risks and shocks, employing a rights-based approach. In 2014, the EU adopted a new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (2015-2019) to keep human rights at the heart of EU external action. Social protection is one of such human rights enumerated.

The EU has promoted social protection as a human right in the countries reviewed, mostly by supporting better access to SP of impoverished and excluded populations. In the Western Balkans, in line with government priorities, the EU supported projects to design better policies and deliver better services to groups such as children, the elderly, the Roma population, and the disabled. In a number of countries, such as Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, there was particular emphasis on child protection and de-institutionalising children in residential care. In Turkey, the EU financed an innovative programme to place disabled persons in small community-based group homes.

While refugees are not formally considered excluded (e.g., in Palestine), they are a highly vulnerable group. In Turkey, ECHO financed refugee activities, as did the Trust Fund for Syrian refugees. The EU was able to ensure that the conditional cash transfer programme implemented with EU support was extended to refugees. In Palestine, both ECHO and, with EU support, UNWRA implemented activities to benefit refugees and, as in Turkey, the EU-supported cash transfers programme was extended to refugee families. ECHO has been a major provider of support in Gaza, and the EU has also supported a WHO-implemented mental health project in that area.

Data on the adequacy, i.e. the level, of social protection benefits are scattered and rarely permit the credible estimation of a trend or of the EU's contribution. However, from a number of countries (Malawi, Palestine, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) we can conclude that the level of benefits in programmes supported by the EU is extremely low. These programmes are not designed to lift households out of poverty; they are intended to alleviate poverty by ensuring that families have access to basic human needs. In three countries – Malawi, Palestine, and Ethiopia – rigorous studies have catalogued a number of positive impacts on recipient households. It is not so much the level of benefit, but the regularity and predictability of benefits that adds value and ultimately increases resilience.

3.6.1 Social protection as a human right promoted at all levels (JC 61)

EU social protection cooperation is aligned to a rights-based approach.

The EU approach to social protection has long been based on the European Social Model, a rights-based approach, and the rights factor was strengthened with the 2012 Communication on SP in development cooperation. Evidence shows that almost all countries have promoted social protection as a human right and that the EU has aligned its social protection interventions to a rights-based approach. In some cases, EU programmes have progressively developed towards this approach. For instance, in Ethiopia the PSNP has become a global reference promoting a transition from an emergency humanitarian response to a more stable safety net available at all times.

This is also true in El Salvador where the Comunidades Solidarias programme first started as Solidarity Network in 2005 but, in 2009, moved towards a rights-based approach including gender equity. In Lesotho and Palestine, EU support has enabled the country to move from a social welfare to a social development approach. In other countries, there are no explicit references to a rights-based approach but this can be inferred as most projects have promoted and addressed human rights and opened up access to services for the poor.

The EU advocated for rights-based approaches in global fora.

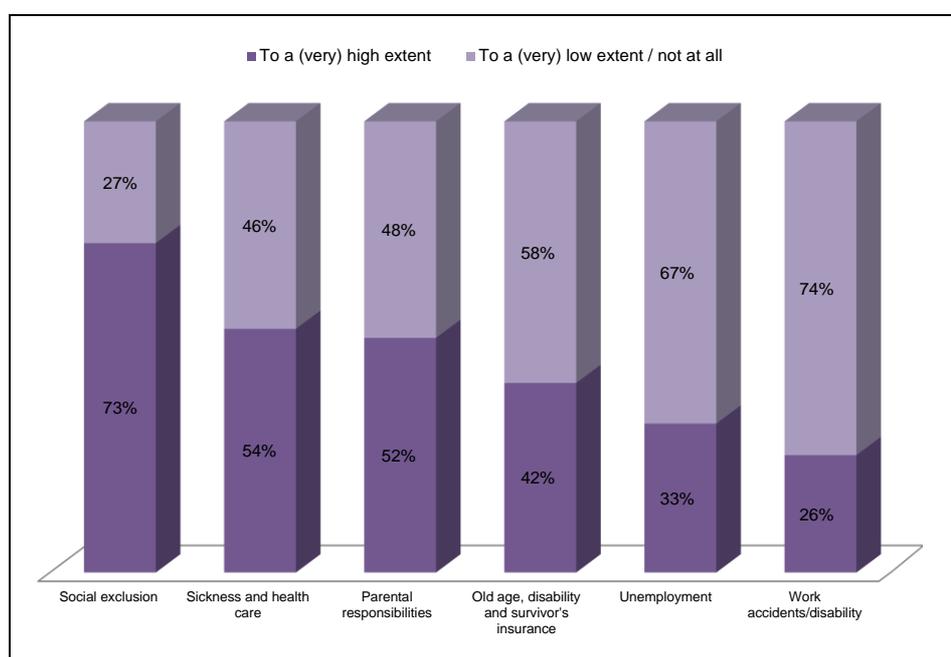
While its activities were limited, the EU engaged in advocacy for rights-based approaches. During the 2012 International Labour Conference deliberations that resulted in Recommendation No. 202, interventions by DG EMPL made a significant contribution to overcoming initial scepticism on the part of the employers (according to participants).

3.6.2 EU support addresses concerns about excluded populations (JC 62)

Excluded populations have been explicitly targeted through EU SP actions.

Excluded populations have been explicitly targeted through EU programmes and have been the beneficiaries of many interventions. The EU's contribution to this area was judged high by the EUDs, see Figure 9 below).

Figure 9 Extent to which the EU support has contributed to improvements in the various areas of SP between 2007 and 2013



Base: EUDs (n=30). Source: Survey analysis, *Particip* (2017)

For instance, in Kyrgyzstan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, social exclusion was one of the most significant thematic areas of EU social protection support between 2007 and 2013. In Lesotho, the Child Grant Programme (CGP) reduced social exclusion and improved the dignity of the poor and very poor. Across the countries reviewed, social protection interventions have targeted the poorest, including women, the disabled, ethnic or minority groups, children, the elderly, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. Some countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Moldova and Paraguay generally refer to vulnerable groups or excluded populations without specifying any category or group. However, targeting is not the same thing as mainstreaming; e.g. only Kyrgyzstan, Ethiopia, Moldova and Palestine refer to mainstreamed actions or cross-cutting issues relating to gender aspects. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for example, government policy focused on poverty, only implicitly taking into account the ethnic dimension. It should be noted however that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia does have both a Minister without Portfolio for Roma Affairs and a Roma Department in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. EU assistance in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was provided targeting specific indigenous populations, especially the Roma. The Ministry of Labour administers and selects the grants for this purpose. In Turkey, the ethnic dimension was taken implicitly into account by geographic targeting of EU support.

NGO/CSO capacity to advocate for SP needs of excluded populations has been addressed through EU SP programmes.

NGO/CSO capacity to advocate for SP needs of excluded populations has been directly and explicitly addressed by the EU in Azerbaijan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Palestine and Ukraine. In Azerbaijan, the majority of projects' secondary objectives were to increase local CSO/NGOs' capacity to advocate for social protection of needy persons. In Palestine, the role of CSOs advocating for the establishment of a social service system was included by the Ministry of Social Development in the 2014-2016 national priorities. In Kyrgyzstan and Ethiopia, the strengthening of CSOs' capacity has been included as an objective or expected result in programming documents (e.g. CSP/Multiannual Indicative Programme MIP). In the Western Balkans, while NGO capacity building was not an explicit objective, this has occurred naturally in the course of using local CSOs for implementation. In countries where increasing the advocacy capacity was not a direct objective of EU support, this has been indirectly achieved by increasing the capacity of NGOs to contribute to local policy making and service deliver.

3.6.3 Levels of social protection (benefits) increased (i.e. adequacy improved) (see EQ2 for coverage) (JC 63)

Non-contributory pensions vary widely relative to the average wage and data do not permit estimation of trends.

The indicators related to this JC are essentially statistical and do not lend themselves to estimation of EU impact. Data coverage has been poor. Only eight out of fourteen case study countries provide information regarding non-contributory pension as a percentage of average wage: Azerbaijan, El Salvador, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Moldova, Paraguay, Turkey and Ukraine. Overall, there are insufficient data to estimate trends.

Non-contributory pension schemes constituted 41.4% of the average wage in Lesotho (2010), 29.6% in Paraguay (2013), 18.4% in El Salvador (2013), 12.4% in Azerbaijan (2008), 7.3% in Turkey (2011), 5.7% in Kyrgyzstan (ILO 2008) and 1.6% in Moldova (2015). In Ukraine, the non-contributory pension has been in the range of a quarter to a third, falling quite significantly between

2010 and 2013. There is no non-contributory pension in Ethiopia. Data were not found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Paraguay and Montenegro.

Similarly, data are available in only a few case study countries to judge trends in the adequacy of social assistance benefits.

Regarding adequacy of social assistance benefits, no data are available to judge trends in most countries and information provided is inconsistent. That said, social assistance benefits coverage has widened in Azerbaijan, El Salvador, Palestine and Paraguay. In Azerbaijan, in the first half of 2016, 72.5% of the number of families eligible in 2010 received cash transfers, over twice than in 2007. The coverage of social protection for those in the poorest quintile increased from 52.1% in 2007 to 76.9% in 2012 in El Salvador and from 51.6% in 2007 to 72.7% in 2011 in Paraguay. In Kyrgyzstan, EU support has contributed to reducing MB/MBPF scheme exclusion and inclusion errors though, despite significant improvements, the programme has been deemed an inadequate safety net and insufficiently pro-poor.

Social protection benefits have stagnated or declined in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Social assistance benefits are considered insufficient for satisfying basic needs in Montenegro. In Palestine, the low benefit paid through the cash transfer programme (about USD 100 per month per family) is judged to be sufficient only to ensure access to the most basic of needs. In Malawi, as well, the low level of SCTP benefits has been commented on, but the principal value added resides in their regularity and predictability. Yet, impact analyses of the Malawian SCTP, the Ethiopian PSNP, and the Palestinian CCT have all identified significant benefits for recipients, even if they remain poor. In all countries reviewed, the contribution of EU support has been to alleviate poverty, not reduce its incidence.

In a few countries reviewed, the World Bank indicator of the adequacy of total social assistance benefits (expressed as the percentage of social assistance benefits to total income of the beneficiary) increased – from 8.7% in 2010 to 9.0% in 2013 in Moldova, from 7.3% in 2006 to 11.8% in 2013 in Ukraine and from 2.8% in 2004 to 7.7% in 2012 in Turkey. The contribution of EU support to these improvements cannot be judged with credibility.

Only a few countries reviewed provided data regarding the number of people receiving unemployment benefits and, overall, coverage is very low.

In none of the case study countries did the EU support social protection measures specifically concerning the unemployed (i.e., unemployment insurance). This reflects a number of contextual factors. Informality is high, meaning unemployment insurance coverage is low. Those who do lose formal sector employment often simply slip into informality or withdraw from the labour force. Thus, lack of EU action in this area simply reflects the situation on the ground in many countries.

To get an idea of the situation, only six countries provided data with regard to unemployment benefits. Overall, the number of unemployed persons receiving unemployment benefits is very low, e.g. 0.9% (2012) in Kyrgyzstan, 5.3% (2015) in Azerbaijan, 9.7% (2012) in Turkey, 11.4% (2012) in Moldova and 21.3% (2011) in Ukraine. Decreasing trends can be observed in Kyrgyzstan, where the percentage of unemployed receiving unemployment benefits went down from 3.3% in 2007 to 0.9% in 2012; Moldova from 22.8% in 2000 to 11.4% in 2012; and Ukraine where this number dropped from 34.4% to 21.3% between 2007 and 2011. All of these figures must be interpreted in light of trends in informality, agricultural employment, the vague definition of unemployment, etc. There are no unemployment programmes anchored in legislation in Ethiopia, Lesotho, El Salvador, Palestine and Paraguay, though in the latter three cases only up to 2013. In Ethiopia and Lesotho there is

instead a severance payment paid by employers in certain cases, but this applies only to the formal sector.

Social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP has increased in a number of case study countries

This indicator needs to be taken with a grain of salt, as it reflects not only coverage and the adequacy of benefits but also the efficiency of the system. An increase can thus reflect either improved coverage and adequacy or worsening efficiency, and imputing any change to EU support would be imprudent. Social protection expenditure as a percentage of GDP has increased in El Salvador (from 11.3% in 2007 to 13.7% in 2014, with the highest expenditure in 2013 - 14.5% of GDP); Ethiopia (from 1.5% in 1999 to 3.2% in 2011), Kyrgyzstan (from 8.7% in 1990 to 9.6% in 2012 although it has to be noted that it significantly decreased between 1995 and 2000) and Paraguay (from 0% in 2007 to 2.8% in 2011). Significant upturns can be observed in Turkey, where total social protection expenditure, including health care, more than doubled between 1990 (5.7%) and 2011 (13.1%); and Ukraine, whose total expenditure on social protection represented 24.6% of GDP in 2013, thus comparable with the EU-28 level (28.6%).

No data are available to document trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lesotho and Montenegro but social protection expenditure in these countries reached 3.8% (2009), 6.13% (2009) and 14.3% (2012) respectively. In Moldova, social protection expenditure (including health care) amounted to 18.3% in 2013. This share increased steadily between 2000 and 2009 and then started to decline with the introduction of a more efficient targeting system in social assistance. Total expenditure on social protection (including health care) has not changed significantly in Azerbaijan since 2000, hovering around 8% of GDP. There are no data available in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Palestine.

In a number of countries, World Bank data permit the disaggregation of the indicator. Total spending on children was 0.3% of GDP (2010) in Kyrgyzstan, 0.2% (2010) in Paraguay and 0.5% in Azerbaijan (2010) and Ukraine (2011). Total expenditure on the elderly amounted to 7.9% of GDP (2011) in Ukraine, 7.4% (2012) in Moldova, 7.0% (2011) in Turkey, 4.2% (2010) in Azerbaijan, 1.8% (2008) in Lesotho, 1.6% (2010) in Paraguay and 1.5% (2010) in Kyrgyzstan. Total spending on the working age population reached 2.7% of GDP in Ukraine (2011), 2.2% in Paraguay (2010), 1.5% (including general social assistance) in Azerbaijan (2010) and 0.2% in Turkey (2011).

3.7 EQ 7: Modalities – strategic approach

To what extent has the approach (financing instruments, modalities and channels) employed by the EU been appropriate and efficient for strengthening social protection in partner countries?



Rationale and coverage of the question

As stated in the IL, a major assumption is that the EU's programming and implementation systems function reasonably well. Any EU support to SP requires a number of strategic choices – whether to use a project approach or budget support, what type of organisation to select for implementation, etc. Problems with a regional dimension call for sharing lessons learned within the region thus and call for regional approaches. Thematic programmes might especially be useful for involving civil society and

local authorities, both crucial actors in SP. The EQ looks at strategic choice of how to intervene, complementarity and synergies between EU interventions in the SP field, and efficiency issues, asking whether transactions costs were minimised and whether monitoring systems were up to the task of identifying problems in implementation and supporting a timely response.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

A wide range of implementation modalities were employed in SP and adequate thought was given to tailoring these to programme objectives and country circumstances. The use of budget support in ENI, DCI and EDF countries was facilitated because the EU had previous experience, through the thematic Food Security Programme, in implementing cash transfer programmes. Strategic gaps have, however, been found. The use of twinning was not widespread enough to correspond to the EU MS's level of expertise in SP. While some gap-filling was accomplished via global thematic programmes, SP was under-represented under these programmes, as it was under regional programmes. In IPA I countries, the unavailability of budget support contributed to the scattering of support over small social exclusion projects which, while often successful in their own right, did little to contribute to overall SP policy dialogue.

The quality of country-level policy dialogue underlying support has been variable and dependent on the level of interest of EUD staff involved. As stated previously, the SP portfolio is typically only part of the basket of responsibilities of the relevant programme officer, and technical expertise in SP is in very short supply. In a number of cases, the EU chose to assume a supportive role and let other institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations agencies take the lead in policy dialogue. Regional-level policy dialogues have been supported in Latin America and Africa, although differences between countries in a region (e.g., IPA beneficiaries) raised challenges, as did difficulties in translating regional initiatives into country-level activities (e.g., Africa). Where EU MSs have extensive experience in partner countries (e.g., German KfW in Malawi), the EU has collaborated closely or engaged in delegated cooperation.

While some monitoring mechanisms put in place by the EC, such as Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) were effective, there have been limitations to the effectiveness of M&E overall. Some EU programmes have only a limited results orientation, leading M&E to focus on inputs rather than results. The quality of data related to SP, particularly gender- and age-disaggregated data, is often very poor in partner countries. In addressing EQ 6, we noted the lack of trend data on the adequacy of SP benefits. There are, however, also examples of excellent analyses of the poverty impacts of EU-supported SP measures (Palestine, Malawi, Ethiopia).

EU interventions have been reasonably efficient. When delays in implementation were experienced, these were as likely to be attributable to low capacity and poor absorption capacity on the part of government as to the EU. In no case examined did delay prove to be fatal.

A number of examples of complementarity have been found – between SOCIEUX and EU-SPS, between IPA and EIDHR, and between ECHO and DG DEVCO / DG NEAR work in SP (for example, ECHO activities in Gaza), and between support for cash transfers and humanitarian assistance (for example, in Palestine, Turkey, and Ethiopia). Thematic programmes such as the Food Support Programme, Investing in People, and now Global Public Goods and Challenges (through EU-SPS) have been used to fill gaps when bilateral country programmes did not include an SP component.

As stated elsewhere, there was progress on involving civil society and local authorities in SP policy design and delivery, but less so for the traditional social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations). Policy dialogue, as also discussed elsewhere, has been of mixed quality at country level; constrained by lack of technical expertise at EUD level and the relatively low level of support provided. However, in a number of countries visited, reasonably high-quality policy dialogue in SP has been achieved despite the challenges (Palestine, Ethiopia, Turkey, Morocco) – the availability of highly engaged counterparts has been one important variable.

3.7.1 The modalities and implementing partners (channels) selected are appropriate given the objectives pursued and the partner country context (JC 71)

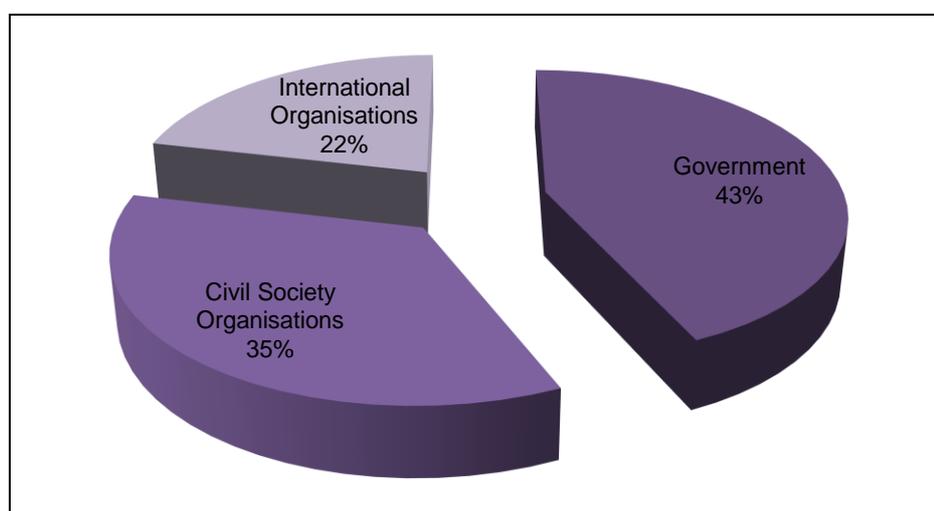
The continuity of the support provided and the experience gained over time were taken account of in selection of modalities.

The EU used a wide range of approaches, modalities and channels to support SP in partner countries. In all countries reviewed, the evaluation has found that the approaches and modalities adopted were appropriate to the objectives pursued and to the country context. In several instances, the EU decided to gradually expand the support provided through specific approaches and modalities based on successful initial experiences. This ensured an adequate level of the support eventually provided. For instance, in Kyrgyzstan a budget support programme on SP provided through the DCI geographic instrument actually built on an earlier (smaller) budget support programme provided under the 2007 Food Security Thematic Programme. Similarly, the EU supported (via sector budget support) a large reform of social assistance in Moldova building on the experience gained in financial management of social protection and social assistance under a previous food security programme. Under IPA I, beneficiaries were not eligible for budget support (a problem being addressed by sector support under IPA II), which contributed to the scattering of support over large numbers of small social exclusion projects.

To some degree, the fact that the EU's involvement in SP has largely been in the form of cash transfer programmes is due to the fact that, through the Food Security Programme, the EU has long experience in these areas.

The EU also gradually built strong partnerships with international agencies in various countries, even though the main channel of delivery of EU to SP was through the Government (see Figure 10). For instance, in two different contexts (sub-Saharan Africa – e.g. Lesotho – and IPA beneficiaries – e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro), the EU decided to progressively strengthen its partnership with UNICEF on social protection and inclusion of children after some positive initial experience. In Ethiopia, after a few years of successful implementation, the EU increased its contribution to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) managed by the World Bank which supports the national Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) since 2006.

Figure 10 Main channels of delivery for EU support to SP between 2007 and 2013



Base: EUDs (n=30). Survey analysis, Particip (2017).

At the same time, it needs to be kept in mind that SP is a relatively small part of the overall EU portfolio, both globally and on a country-by-country basis. In Morocco, budget support to health finance reform was very small indeed compared to the national budget. In Turkey, the EU's contribution was more noticeable for its provision of European expertise than it was for its financial weight.

Limited use of EU MS expertise for capacity building in IPA and ENI countries.

During the period 2007-2013, the EU increasingly relied on demand-driven instruments such as twinning to mobilise EU MS expertise to help IPA and ENI countries to develop the capacities of their national public institutions involved in SP and enhance approximation to EU standards and norms. In Azerbaijan, the EU responded positively to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population's increasingly strong appetite for twinning. In part, the choice of twinning was because the EU and partner authorities could not come to agreement on the value added of budget support nor could they settle on shared priorities in PFM. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, twinning projects were also developed to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and specific national agencies (e.g., Employment Service Agency).

However, overall, the use of twinning and other instruments relying on EU MS SP expertise remained rather limited in IPA and ENI countries. This contrasts with the strong emphasis put on capacity building support under IPA and ENI, but reflects well the overall limited attention paid to broad SP-related policy reform in EU programming documents and the stronger emphasis placed on social inclusion aspects. In these countries, the approach adopted in the EU support to SP mainly consisted in: (i) the provision of ad hoc support, through service contracts and, sometimes, supply contracts, to strengthen the action of specific national institutions; (ii) direct support, through specific grants / calls for proposals, to local stakeholders providing social assistance (e.g. "Family and Childcare Centres", "Women's Rights Centre", "Vocational and educational training centres").

Since 2014, some short-term technical support to ENI countries was provided through the SOCIEUX facility (the facility does not cover IPA beneficiaries). A mid-term review is moderately positive on the programme. None of the

countries selected for the post-2014 EU-SPS programme are in the ENI region: the countries participating in the programme are Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Togo, Vietnam and Zambia. However, in those countries, SOCIEUX and SPS-EU are complementary, with the latter contributing to the long-term development of SP policy and capacity while the former is mobilised for focused near-term technical expertise.

Challenges in the implementation of regional programmes.

The EU supported several regional initiatives on SP since 2007. During 2008-2011, a Joint Programme of EU and Council of Europe on Social Security Coordination and Social Security Reforms in South East Europe was implemented aiming at enhancing social security coordination and social security reforms in Southeast Europe¹⁴. In the context of the Africa-EU partnership, the EU has supported a number of regional initiatives promoting policy dialogue, exchange of information and capacity building on the continent, including in the framework of the thematic partnership on “Migration, Mobility and Employment” and through the Africa Platform for Social Protection. The result has been the formation of a regional network of experts and exchange of experiences and approaches.

The EU is currently cooperating with the African Union in a programme to extend social protection to artisans; it has also through direct financial support contributed to capacity in the Social Affairs Department at African Union Headquarters. In Latin America, the EU has supported a large technical cooperation programme (EUROsociAL I, II and +) since 2005, which relied on South-South and triangular cooperation and aimed at strengthening the design and implementation of public policies focusing on social cohesion. EUROsociAL has involved close cooperation with Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and interacted well with country SP programmes in Paraguay and El Salvador.

While EU regional support in the area of SP generally proved to be relevant, challenges were faced during the implementation of the programmes. For instance, in the IPA programme, the diversity of countries covered, including the different level of development of national SP systems (e.g., between Turkey and Kosovo), made it difficult to ensure the same level of interest and engagement across participating countries. In some regional programmes (e.g., the Africa-EU partnership and the IPA programme on social security coordination), partner countries involved faced difficulties to translate concepts discussed at regional level into concrete changes in the legislative and policy framework at national level.

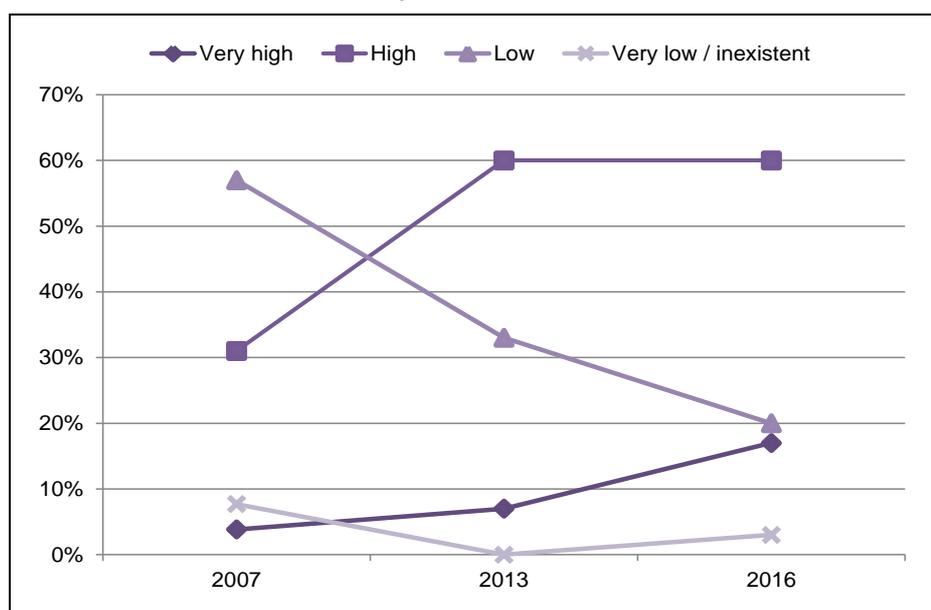
Strong ownership by national authorities but often weak involvement of other

EU support to SP has generally benefited from strong ownership by partner governments although the level of ownership has fluctuated with the evolution of the country’s political context (which was also confirmed in the EUD Survey, see Figure below).

¹⁴ The purpose of the IPA Social Security Co-ordination and Social Security Reforms Joint Programme between the European Commission(EC) and the Council of Europe was to continue assisting the Beneficiary Parties in the South-East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, as well as Kosovo 1) in further enhancing the regional coordination of the social security systems and facilitating institutional, legislative and administrative reforms in the field of social protection according to Council of Europe and EU standards. The Regional Programme started in March 2008 and lasted until November 2010. This Programme was the integral continuation of the Social Institutions Support Joint Programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe under the CARDS Regional Action Programme (2004-2007). More on https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/sscssr/Edito/001Feb06-1_en.asp

stakeholders.

Figure 11 Ownership of national stakeholders in SP at the beginning (2007), at the end (2013) of the period under evaluation, and in 2016, rated by the EUDs



Base: EUDs (n=30). Source: Survey analysis, *Particip* (2017).

The continuity of the support provided and the particular nature of the modalities used in some instances (e.g. budget support) have been factors explaining the overall high level of ownership observed. While a strong involvement by the main partner public institutions (usually, the line ministry in charge of social protection) was usually ensured, this was not always the case for other national stakeholders.

The EU faced difficulties to ensure strong ownership of the support by trade unions and employers' organisations, in part because of weak institutional relations and in part because of the low capacity of the social partners. Adding to the challenges, due to the anti-poverty and social inclusion focus of EU assistance, many if not most beneficiaries of EU actions were outside formal sector employment. The EU had greater success in involving civil society, notably at local level, in priority setting and service delivery. Where it perceived that opportunities for using civil society were being missed (e.g., Malawi) adjustments were made to address the deficiency.

Mixed success in engaging in high quality policy dialogue

Although the EU is usually engaged in dialogue with partner country authorities on broad issues, especially during the overall programming of EU bilateral assistance, there have been varying degrees of success in fostering high quality dialogue on social protection. This is explained by the limited policy dimension of supported interventions in several countries. But, even where sector wide approaches were adopted, the EU has had difficulties to engage in in-depth policy dialogue on SP reform. Some obstacles lie in the partner countries' often complex political and institutional environments and the cross-sector nature of SP reform. Some challenges were also posed by the quality in the design of the performance assessment matrix for budget support operations (e.g. Kyrgyzstan, where the conditionality expressed in the policy matrix was significantly weakened due to poor performance).

The limited capacity of the EU to engage in meaningful dialogue with partner government and national institutions has also been an obstacle. In some instances, the EU let implementing partners lead some crucial aspects of policy dialogue with national authorities and kept to a supportive role (e.g., the World Bank in Ethiopia and UN agencies in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina). At a more general level, the quality of policy dialogue has been dependent on the personalities involved. Changes of staff in EUDs or in partner country's institutions involved in SP have often had a detrimental effect of the depth and quality of dialogue. However, there are examples of countries where SP policy dialogue has been effective despite the absence of a specialist dedicated full time to the area at the EUD. One such example among countries visited is Ethiopia, others are Palestine, Turkey, and Morocco.

3.7.2 EU financed interventions are mutually reinforcing (JC 72)

Some synergies between geographic interventions but more could have been achieved.

There are positive examples of synergies achieved between EU support to SP and other geographic interventions. For instance, in Lesotho, bridges were built between the support provided through UNICEF, which focussed on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, and the General Budget Support programme (PRBS) which covered broad policy reform issues. However, in instances, there has been a tendency of EUDs to work in silos and support to SP had to compete with other priorities of cooperation. SP aspects related to a specific sector (e.g., health) have not always been coordinated with the sector approach as a whole. This situation was reinforced by the overall relatively low level of financial allocations going to the area of SP in EU country programmes. Only very limited evidence has been found on linkages between SP interventions at country level and regional interventions.

Limited linkages with thematic programmes, but some gap-filling.

There has been some level of complementarity between SP interventions funded under the geographic instruments and projects funded under the EIDHR instrument in IPA beneficiaries. But synergies have been limited. Also, the evaluation could only identify very limited operational linkages between SP interventions funded under geographic instruments and EIDHR projects. On the positive side, thematic programmes such as the Food Security Programme (FSP), Investing in People and, post-2014, the Human Development component of Global Public Goods and Challenges have been used to gap fill when there was no room for SP under geographical bilateral instruments.

Increasing synergies with humanitarian actions.

Positive examples of complementarity between SP interventions and ECHO activities include countries such as Ethiopia, Turkey, and Palestine, where good synergies and operational linkages were found between support to SP

and humanitarian interventions for refugees. Moreover, at a more global level, there have been increasing efforts to link humanitarian actions and development interventions supporting SP, especially in the context of the EU resilience agenda (despite the fact that the EU's resilience Communication makes no reference to SP). In particular, in the West Africa Sahel region, ECHO has been strongly involved in the EU Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) programme which aims at reducing people's vulnerability to shocks and increasing their resilience. The strengthening of SP systems is a key objective in the programme's first pillar.

Limited use of global programmes.

Recently launched global programmes such as the SOCIEUX facility or the EU SPS programme have proven to be useful to complement the support provided through other instruments. SOCIEUX has helped to fill gaps where SP could not be included as a focal sector in bilateral cooperation due to other important priorities. However, as it is largely demand driven, SOCIEUX has not been used as widely or as effectively as was possible. In some instances (e.g. Cambodia), the EU-SPS programme has been used to inform SP stakeholders on the availability of other types of EU support such as the short-term technical assistance support available via the SOCIEUX facility. More generally, good complementarity exists between SOCIEUX, a "light" mechanism to provide short-term support, and the EU-SPS programme which focussed on longer term partnerships with public institutions in selected countries. EU-SPS has not only provided high-quality research on selected countries, but also concrete support for training, e.g. producing a curriculum and training materials for social workers in Ethiopia. In general, thematic instruments such as EIDHR, Investing in People, Migration and Asylum, and others were under-used to finance actions related to SP.

3.7.3 EU support has been delivered in a timely fashion, minimising costs for all parties involved, and has been effectively monitored (JC 73)

Limited negative effects of delays accumulated during implementation.

Overall, there has been a reasonable level of efficiency in the EU support to SP. Delays were often experienced during the launch of the programmes (e.g. for the thematic programmes such as SOCIEUX or EURosociAL) and, in some instances, after abrupt changes in the partner country context, including at political level (e.g. in Kyrgyzstan in 2010).

In China, not a case study country, a large TA project became bogged down when differences emerged between government and the EU over government's request for the construction of a training centre. There were also efficiency losses in some budget support programmes like in Moldova where accompanying TA was in place only several months after the start of the programme. But, in most cases, delays could be caught up on and did not affect the successful completion of the intervention. When there were delays in TA, this was as likely to be due to inefficiency on the part of government (e.g., Turkey) than a result of EU procedures. Once TA was delivered, the level of satisfaction with its quality was high. While delays and other implementation issues faced during the provision of EU assistance may have had only a limited impact on the overall performance of the supported actions, the achievement of the desired impact has been often challenged by important inefficiencies in the partner countries' institutional environment and weaknesses in the SP schemes the EU intended to support.

Although this aspect was usually well identified during the design of the support, the weak capacity of some stakeholders involved at the local level (e.g. local governments, NGOs) remained a limiting factor and mitigation

measures such as targeted capacity building actions could only partially remove these obstacles. In Ethiopia, the PSNP cash transfer programme faced challenges in terms of compliance with procurement procedures at the regional and Woreda (district) level, and important capacity building efforts went into this area.

Limited transaction costs involved.

The choice of channels and modalities has helped to minimise transaction costs on the EU side. The EU has used approaches that complied well with the Paris Declaration principles. In general, it has coordinated well its support with other development partners, including EU MSs (e.g., Spain and Luxembourg in El Salvador, Germany in Malawi, Italy in Palestine, a broad range of donors and agencies in Ethiopia). This was in particular the case in the countries where the support was channelled through international organizations (UN or WB-managed trust funds) or where the budget support modality was used. It is likely that, in these specific cases, transaction costs were also minimised for the national counterparts, including the national authorities.

Effectiveness of M&E systems put in place for EU support affected by constraints in data availability.

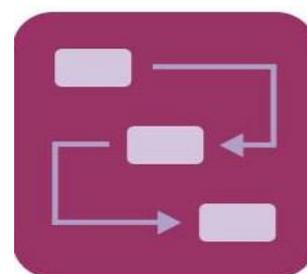
At country level, some EU interventions have had a limited results-oriented dimension in their M&E framework (e.g. the PEGASE programme in Palestine). However, both Ethiopia and Malawi offer good examples of analysis going beyond the monitoring of quantitative inputs and outputs, and of lessons learnt being adequately taken into account in adjusting programmes.

In addition to specific thematic studies on SP, the EU has generally put sound monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place for its support to SP, but has been constrained by data availability. Constraints arose from the weakness of national statistical systems, lack of a monitoring system, and weakness in terms of a results focus and related measurable indicators. Embedded technical assistance has often helped to enhance monitoring of EU support. There have been extensive Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) missions carried out, including at regional level (e.g. several ROM missions were carried out in all partner countries to monitor the IPA regional programme social security coordination). For EU-SPS activities, the EU invested resources to support annual performance assessments and a mid-term review of the overall programme is underway. Thematic programmes were regularly evaluated (e.g. SOCIEUX was evaluated after only two years of implementation). In addition, various instruments' evaluations were implemented at a global level and highlighted some useful lessons learnt (e.g. 2012 evaluation on the Twinning instrument in the European Neighbourhood Policy ENP region).

However, it also appears that there have been missed opportunities, not least for monitoring and evaluating EU support for SP at the global level as illustrated by the difficulties experienced by the evaluation team in determining what EU interventions actually fell under the ambit of the evaluation.

3.8 EQ 8: Coherence, added value

To what extent has EU support to social protection been coherent with other EU sector policies and to what extent has it added value to the EU Member States' and other donors' interventions?



Rationale and coverage of the question

A fundamental commitment of the EU is to add value to its MS's interventions, which can occur through sheer size (critical mass), coordination, or persuasiveness in policy dialogue. As an example of the first, few MS will be in a position to finance a system-wide SP reform. The EU's financial mass may also put it in a position to generate funding from other sources. The EU should avoid overlap and duplication of other donors' efforts, which in turn requires an institutional structure for consultation and coordination regarding programming and implementation. The interventions of the EU and MS should be organised to maximise effectiveness and impact. Within the EU itself, there is need to ensure that DGs involved in SP – chiefly DEVCO, NEAR, EMPL, Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (ECFIN) and to some extent Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) – coordinate their efforts.

Summary answer to the evaluation question

EU support to social protection has been aligned with and supplemented government, MS and other donors' policies and interventions. EU support has been coordinated with other donors, and donor coordination in the area worked well at country level. EU has taken a leadership role or participated actively in donor working groups, and is also increasingly using joined-up approaches (in all areas, not just social protection), especially in the new programming cycle. EU also participated in Multi-Donor Trust Funds (MDTFs) in different thematic areas that touch upon social protection. The EU has also supported host governments' efforts to lead coordination of donor support to relevant SP policies and interventions. While the success of donor coordination has varied, host governments' interest and ability to take over coordination of external aid positively developed during the period evaluated, and afterwards. A challenge is that, in some countries, responsibility for various aspects of SP is widely spread across ministries. Only one example (Turkey) has been found of a country where the EU supported the national social security institute responsible for all aspects of social insurance. The evaluation found a varying degree of success in leveraging EU funds by government or other donor sources. EU value added in social protection has not consisted in the scale of its support; as social protection is not often a focal sector and the use of budget support is limited. It has come largely from the uniqueness of the European Social Model, with its rights-based approach, and the European commitment to sustainable social safety nets and social inclusion. EU support to SP has taken into account the importance of strengthening coherence with other EU sector policies. While there is some degree of coordination between DGs, e.g., DG EMPL, and DGs DEVCO and NEAR, this has been fairly low-key and there are opportunities for closer coordination. As evidenced by interviews and the paucity of identified joint activities, coordination with the ILO was not strong.

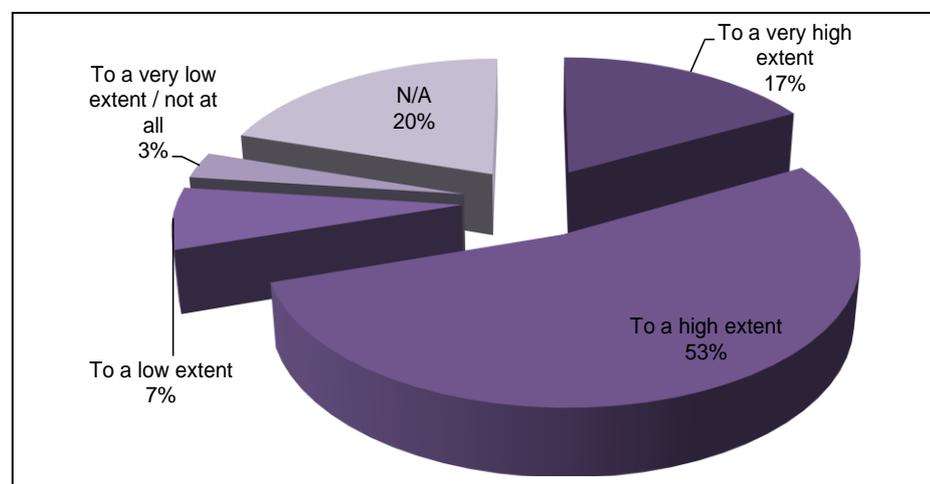
3.8.1 EU policy and interventions in social protection support and supplement other policies / interventions, including those of other donors and EU MS (JC 81)

EU invests efforts to align its policy and interventions with government priorities, MS and donors' interventions in countries

In the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, attention has been paid over the period to alignment and closer donor coordination, particularly in the context of preparing and implementing sector-wide support programmes. EU support to SP has been well coordinated with EU MS, specialised agencies (such as UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) the World Bank and regional development banks, e.g. the Inter-American Development Bank. Coordination with the ILO was not strong, as confirmed during interviews in the field, and also evidenced by that paucity of joint actions. In most countries, the EU has played an active role in the coordination structure, which was also indicated in the EUD Survey (see Figure 9 for an overview of EUD responses). In IPA and some ENI and DCI countries (e.g. Kyrgyzstan, Palestine, El Salvador), donor coordination structures have been chaired jointly by the EU, the host government and sometimes another donor/UN Agency. The EU has also embarked on joint formulation processes of SP interventions, and there are examples of funding instruments established to facilitate donor coordination and improve channelling of funds for social protection (e.g. Palestine and Ethiopia and, before the outbreak of war, Yemen). In Ethiopia, the EU has supported donor harmonisation

through the financing of the Development Assistance Group (DAG), established 2001), which comprises 30 bilateral and multilateral development agencies providing development cooperation to Ethiopia. The programme has established several coordination mechanisms in order to ensure joint management and monitoring of the intervention: Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), Donor Working Group (DWG) and Donor Coordination Team (DCT). Another programme in Ethiopia, the Protection of Basic Services programme, supported by 12 donors, can also be considered an effective partnership with a well-articulated system of joint donor budget support, coordination and dialogue: Joint Budget and Aid Reviews (JBARs) and Joint Review and Implementation Support (JRIS) missions every six months. Comparable examples of coordination also exist in Malawi, where the EU actively participated in joint mechanisms (e.g. cash transfer programme's steering committee meetings, joint review of the national social support strategy), decided to channel most of its support through a delegation agreement with an EU MS (Germany/ KfW) and used lessons learnt from a large UK-funded intervention in the area of resilience to improve the design of its support.

Figure 12 EUD participation in the donor working groups between 2007 and 2013



Base: EUDs (n=30). Source: Survey analysis, *Particip* (2017).

While governments have shown increasing interest in SP, it has not often been a focal sector. Where budget support has been used, it has added value.

Programming of EU assistance has been done in consultation with national governments, and action fiches correspond to national priorities. These consultations are appreciated by stakeholders and have led to substantial discussions and increased ownership. However, since the Agenda for Change commits the EU to being active in only 3 (occasionally 4) sectors, budget support has not been much used in SP. Exceptions among countries reviewed include Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, where SP focused on reforming social assistance, and Paraguay and El Salvador.

Outside countries reviewed, SP was a focal sector receiving budget support in Swaziland and Tajikistan. In countries where it was used, the budget support modality has proven effective in delivering good policy dialogue and as a vehicle for delivering EU technical assistance.

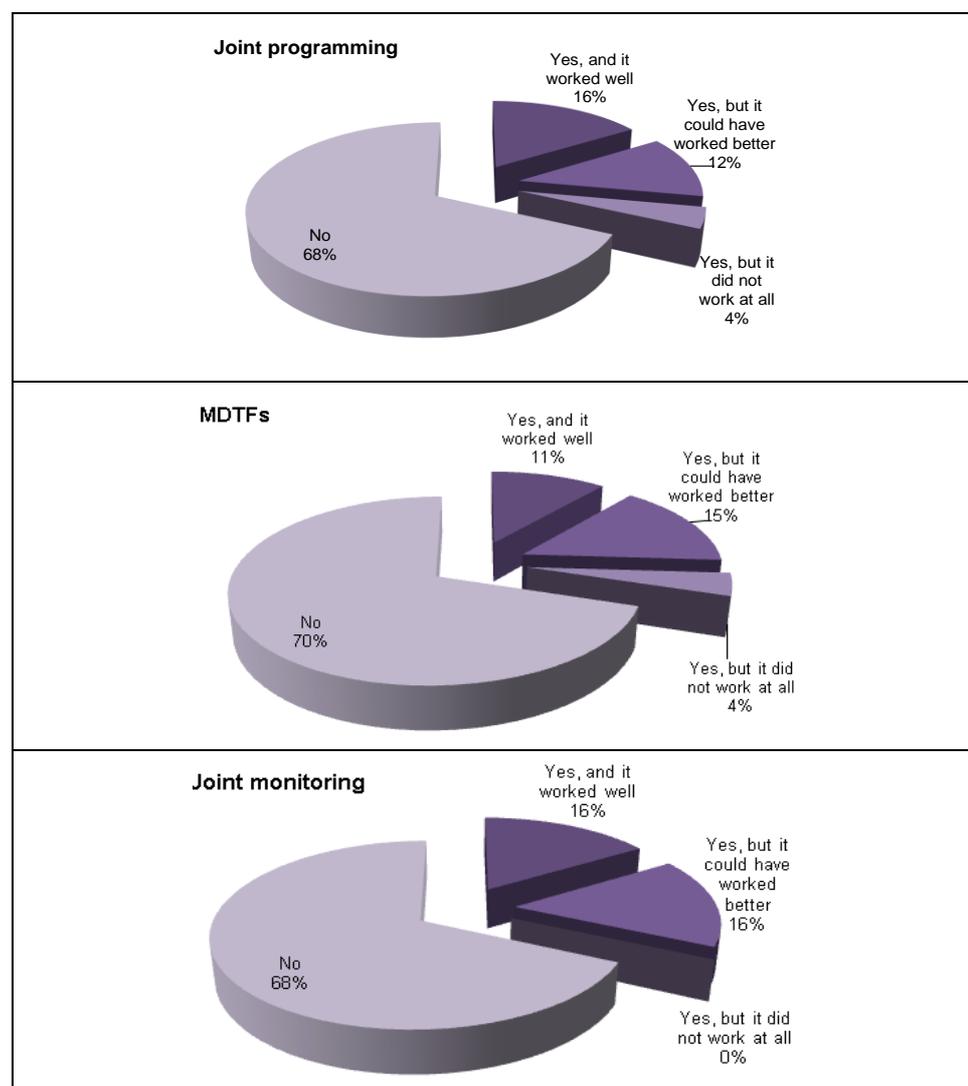
EU participates in joined-up approaches including SP components.

EU contributes to various Multi-Donor Trust Funds (MDTFs) not only in the field of social protection, but in the field of PFM, employment, justice or other thematic areas. Such examples are found in Kyrgyzstan, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In El Salvador, the EU's support for SP was combined with support by Spain and Luxembourg and this common budget support scheme involved the use of joint verification

missions, joint evaluations, sharing most of the performance measuring indicators, etc. The PEGASE direct financial support programme in Palestine was supported by multiple EU MSs.

EU also has taken the lead in managing or participating in joint programming (JP), monitoring or other similar initiatives. For example, EU along with Sweden and Germany engaged in the elaboration of a Joint Country Support Strategy (JCSS) 2007-2010 for Kyrgyzstan. A similar example is Ethiopia. However, a recent evaluation of Joint Programming in all aspects found that, while advancing in strategic and programming terms, JP is still in its early stages in terms of the number of countries where it is actually being implemented.

Figure 13 EU participation in or management of joined-up approaches between 2007 and 2013



Base: EUDs (n=32). Source: Survey analysis, Particip (2017).

Partner countries are increasingly taking leading role in coordination of aid to SP.

Interviews with EU geographic desks indicate that, when there is donor support to SP, government interest in coordinating it has generally been high (an exception being Bosnia and Herzegovina due to its complex governance situation). Partner governments are increasingly taking over coordination on SP and establishing broad formal mechanisms for donor coordination. For example, in some ENI countries, separate governmental units have been put in place to coordinate donor aid to the country (for example, National Coordinating Unit in Azerbaijan; in others (e.g, Moldova) coordination units

have been embedded in relevant ministries. In IPA beneficiaries, where IPA I Component IV Human Resource Development (HRD) was open (Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro), government institutions are leading the implementation, which ensures government leadership in programming and coordination of donors in the HRD sector. For example, donor support to HRD in Montenegro is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare while overall assistance is coordinated by the National IPA Coordination office and the Ministry of Finance. In El Salvador, EU SP budget support has helped to strengthen donor coordination and the leading role of the government through two important instances: the Vice-Ministry of Cooperation for Development and the Secretary for Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency.

The extent to which EU can leverage its support by generating funding from other sources varies significantly.

The EU experienced different levels of success in leveraging its support with funding from other sources for supported programmes. In some countries, governments succeeded in mobilising internal resources, thus increasing their commitments for funded programmes (e.g. in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan); in others, there is a decline in proportion of various programmes' funding from sources other than EU (e.g. Palestine, Paraguay). Primary reasons for this decline are decrease of aid to these countries or global economic crisis. No data on leveraging funds is available for IPA beneficiaries.

3.8.2 EU support for social protection coherent with other EU sector policies (e.g. trade, employment) (JC 82)

EU support to social protection is broadly coherent with other EU Sector policies (social development, trade, employment, etc.).

EU support to countries is not only focussed on social protection but maintains dialogue and support to different policies relating to trade, social development, environment, rule of law, public administration, etc. In most countries analysed, EU support for SP included an important social inclusion, human rights and employability component. Some funded programmes across the sample of countries under review also include vocational training, labour intermediation, entrepreneurship and promotion of employability (e.g. IPA beneficiaries, El Salvador, etc.). In Moldova and Ethiopia, in particular) there is evidence of coordination with EU migration policy. Turkey and Palestine provide good examples of coordination with refugee policy, and the entire engagement with Palestine is largely driven by the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Inter-DGs coordination on SP happens, but there is room for improvement.

The EU has a well-established strategic planning and programming cycle and decision-making processes and procedures, set out in the EC's rules of procedure and rules giving effect to them. As specified in the *Vademecum on Working Relations with the EEAS*, the consistency and effectiveness of EU external action requires close coordination, from an early stage, between the various services of the Commission, and between those services and European External Action Service (EEAS). However, in general, the involvement of DGs other than DEVCO and NEAR in the design of the EU external assistance to SP has remained limited. Interviews show some divergences of views on specific topics such as PFM reform or more generally on the SP conceptual framework in the context of external support. In a number of IPA beneficiaries, DG EMPL led some policy discussions on SP, but (consistent with the objective of IPA I) they were more oriented towards building capacity to manage structural funds rather than sector reform. Much policy dialogue related to Platform 2 with ENPI/ENI Eastern Partner countries

was the responsibility of DG GROW, and Ministry representation was reported to be low. SP is an EU MS competence, not an EU competence. Under DG EMPL, it is mainly dealt with in the context of the dedicated SP committee advisory to the EPSCO Council. This deals with EU MSs, not third countries. Interviews with major international players in SP show that there is a perception by external actors that communication and coordination between DG EMPL and DGs NEAR and DEVCO has been sub-optimal.

4 Conclusions

Four clusters of conclusions. For analytical clarity, we have grouped the conclusions into three clusters:

- Policy and strategic focus: conclusions 1 to 4.
- Effects of EU support 5 and 6.
- EU institutional environment and implementation approaches conclusions: 7 to 11.

4.1 Cluster 1: Policy framework and strategic focus

4.1.1 Conclusion 1: Strategic focus of EU support

EU support to SP has concentrated very largely on social assistance and social inclusion. This is consistent with the EU's focus on poverty and vulnerable / marginalized populations. The EU has mostly steered clear of supporting the reform of weak or failing social insurance systems.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 2 and 5.

Following the standard division of social protection into social assistance and social insurance (requiring contributions and relevant mostly to those in formal employment), the EU's support has been largely in the area of social assistance and, closely related, social inclusion. This is consistent with the EU's core objective of fighting poverty and the human rights-based approach to social protection. While many IPA/ENI country social protection systems, which include significant social insurance segments, have fallen into fragmentation and disrepair requiring fundamental reform, such reforms have been tackled by other donors, principally the World Bank and ILO, but also UK's Department for International Development (DfID), USAID, and others. In some countries, the EU contributed to comprehensive reviews of SP schemes at the country level, which helped to better identify challenges related to harmonisation. However, such analyses were not systematically carried out and the strategic focus of EU support corresponded to an explicit division of labour in only a few countries.

4.1.2 Conclusion 2: EU strategy for social protection in partner countries

Prior to 2012, the EU did not have a policy to guide social protection in its external assistance, although this did not prevent it from pursuing the poverty alleviation and social inclusion agenda. In fact, the putting in place of an explicit strategy in 2012 does not appear to have greatly affected the EU's scope of interventions.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1, 3 and 8.

The evaluation has found a considerable degree of continuity in the nature of support to social protection during the 2007-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework and the 2014-2020 MFF. This is because the 2011 Agenda for Change, which set the stage for the 2014-2020 MFF, reinforced the EU's commitment to poverty eradication and the "values agenda" having to do with human rights, gender equality, and the prevention of social exclusion. These were at the core of the EU's social protection cooperation in the first MFF and occupied the same position in the subsequent one. The analysis of SP found in the 2012 Communication 446 and in subsequent policy documents prepared at EU headquarters has placed social assistance and social inclusion in a broader context but has not led to any fundamental changes in direction or scope in programming and implementation.

EU support to social protection in all programmes evaluated has aligned to government priorities,

including the ILO Social Protection Floor in countries that have officially adopted this as their approach to SP.

Many of the greatest challenges to social protection, as well as many of the most innovative approaches, are in Upper Middle Income Countries. EU SP strategy has not been greatly evident in these countries, nor have opportunities for valuable knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchanges been fully exploited, with some exceptions (e.g. EUROsociAL).

4.1.3 Conclusion 3: Social protection as a focal sector

SP has remained a relatively minor part of the EU's cooperation portfolio. In line with partner country priorities, it has only rarely been a focal sector. There has been some effort to link SP interventions to other interventions (e.g. humanitarian assistance, food security), with mixed results.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ1.

In only a few countries has social protection been a focal sector, in part because of the limitation of focal sectors to three or four in line with the Agenda for Change. This has limited opportunities for budget support operations, although in order for budget support to succeed, the partner country must have in place both a solid social protection strategy, as well as adequate PFM. There have been some instances of budget support (a number of them in countries reviewed in the course of this evaluation), and in general these programmes have worked well. In some cases (mostly DCI/EDF countries), social protection actions were embedded in broader strategies; however, they have rarely been integrated into the sort of broad strategic approach that would be consistent with in the 2012 Communication.

In the Western Balkans, where budget support was not available under IPA I and SP is only a “soft acquis”; EU financial assistance focussed on local projects with very specific themes (e.g. child protection, persons with disabilities, socially excluded indigenous ethnic groups such as the Roma, the elderly, etc.). This is consistent with the EU emphasis on decentralization and support for local authorities. Policy dialogue in the context of accession negotiations addressed challenges related to social protection in areas such as labour law, inclusion, and social policy. However, EU support had only limited impact on social protection policy because the focus of negotiations was elsewhere (e.g., rule of law, public administration reform).

There have been attempts to link social protection to humanitarian assistance (e.g., ECHO interventions). While there have been specific success stories (e.g., extending cash transfers to refugees in Turkey), a broad strategic linking-up of social protection with humanitarian aid remains elusive.

4.1.4 Conclusion 4: Coherence with European values

EU support to SP has been coherent with the European values and the EU's dedication to a human rights-based approach to development, but there has been insufficient gender mainstreaming.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 3 and 8.

The European Social Model regards social protection as a human right, a view embodied in the EU's 2012 Communication on social protection in external support. Specific aspects include the right to a basic minimum income sufficient to allow a household to live in dignity, the right to access to basic health care, the right of those in need to basic social services, and the right to be free from discrimination and social exclusion. This evaluation has found that EU cooperation in social protection has covered all three of these areas, consistent with partner country priorities. In line with partner country needs, not all areas have been covered in all countries. While gender aspects have been reflected in all EU social protection support reviewed – indeed, many actions supported directly benefit women more than they do men -- , there is no evidence of EU gender expertise having being systematically involved in social protection intervention design and implementation; i.e., no evidence of mainstreaming.

4.2 Cluster 2: Effects of EU support

4.2.1 Conclusion 5: Tangible results

EU actions have contributed to tangible progress in the fight against social exclusion and alleviation of

poverty, but country-level effectiveness has not been at the level of social protection as a broad system; rather at the level of components of a comprehensive SP system.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 2 and 6.

The EU actions in social protection reviewed have been moderately effective. In the Western Balkans, socially excluded populations have gained greater access to basic social services and the quality of such services, both in terms of policy and delivery, has improved. Particularly at the local, but also at the national level, there have been institutional reforms and capacity has improved, though to varying degrees in different countries.

Especially in the area of children and the disabled, there was progress on policy reform and de-institutionalisation in a number of IPA, ENI and DCI countries. The challenge of labour migration for families was addressed. There was also significant effort on inclusion of the Roma population in economic activity.

EU-supported cash transfer programmes in DCI, EDF, and ENI countries examined have produced tangible results in enhancing income security and thus alleviating poverty, as attested to by rigorous impact assessments. They have ensured access to basic human needs, thus have promoted social inclusion and reduced inequality. That said, benefits are too low to actually lift households out of poverty; they alleviate poverty but do not reduce its incidence. The main value added of these programmes has been the regularity and predictability of benefits, not their size.

This country-level effectiveness has been mostly scattered, not at the level of social protection as a comprehensive system. Some of this is due to lack of capacity, some is due to lack of resources, some is due to lack of partner interest.

4.2.2 Conclusion 6: Fragile sustainability

The sustainability of many effects/benefits achieved remains fragile. Ministries responsible for social protection are short of resources, even as the demand for SP rises.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ7.

With EU support, some countries reviewed in this evaluation have put in place national social protection policies that have been widely praised: El Salvador, Palestine, and Ethiopia. Yet, implementation of these ambitious plans lags behind policy formulation. Ministries responsible for social protection must compete with other ministries that have historically had a stronger claim on resources. While the constraints are ultimately fiscal, proximate constraints on policy implementation are often related to basic capacity issues – a need for more social workers at decentralised level, more vehicles and petrol to effect household visits, etc. The EU has contributed to sustainability by providing TA aimed at analysing future resource needs. At the same time, sustainability in many countries would be enhanced by better involvement of civil society, social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations), the private sector, and Parliaments.

4.3 Cluster 3: EU institutional environment and implementation approaches

4.3.1 Conclusion 7: Policy dialogue at international level

Due to staff capacity constraints in all three DGs directly involved in SP (DEVCO, NEAR, and EMPL), the EU has not fulfilled its potential to contribute to major international policy debates on SP. Contributing to insufficient visibility in international policy dialogue is the weak coordination on SP between relevant EC services, EEAS, and MSs.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 3 and 7.

International policy debate on social protection continues to be dominated by the World Bank, the ILO, UNICEF, and a scattering of other institutions including some bilateral donors. While the EU participates in important policy groups such as SPIAC-B, it is not perceived by other players as doing so as effectively as it could or should. Some reasons for this are due to governance of the relevant fora; others to factors internal to the EU including staff capacity constraints and weakness of coordination structures.

4.3.2 Conclusion 8: Policy dialogue at country level

The quality of policy dialogue at country level has been variable.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1 and 4.

Because social protection is rarely a focal sector (nor is budget support even available, as under IPA I), there is seldom an EUD programme officer exclusively following the sector. SP may be spread among several EUD officers working on employment, health, education, etc. Technical expertise is in short supply and the quality of policy dialogue is dependent on the level of interest of the personality who is assigned the dossier, who will typically be handling a number of areas. In some countries reviewed, the EUD's level of interest in the subject has been high and there has been good policy dialogue in the area. However, it is important to have a long-term continuous engagement and staff who know well the local context, as social protection reforms are institutionally complex. In many, if not most countries, social protection responsibilities are spread across multiple ministries, in addition to which the vertical dimension (e.g., local / regional / national) is complicated. Where there has been long engagement and the EU is seen as a neutral external partner, it has been possible for the EU to facilitate dialogue between national partners responsible for SP. The EU has also played a valuable role in donor coordination in countries where a substantial number of MSs are active in SP.

The EU has supported the implementation of large analytical studies in the past, which have received some attention, especially among EU actors. But these studies have been "one off" actions, not repeated, and the EU has not positioned itself as a key supporter of analytical work in the area of social protection (which would have enhanced its visibility). The quality of analytical technical assistance provided by the EU has, however, been high.

See Conclusion 3 for policy dialogue in the Western Balkans.

4.3.3 Conclusion 9: Implementation modalities

Implementation modalities have been used in a reasonably effective and efficient way. In particular, the use of budget support has contributed to policy reforms while supporting the implementation of specific social protection schemes with a range of partners, e.g. NGOs and UN agencies. However, a number of strategic gaps and missed opportunities have been identified.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ7.

The interventions studied have been implemented using a range of modalities, and all have been reasonably effective and efficient. The project modality has been usefully applied to fighting social exclusion and has been successful in building capacity of CSOs and local authorities. Budget support has resulted in institutional re-organisation, capacity building, and improved policies. In one instance (Malawi), the EU resorted to delegated cooperation because the bilateral MS donor concerned had long experience in the country. In Palestine, direct financial support through the PEGASE programme was a logical source of funds for social protection because of the EU's broad commitment to serving as a financial lifeline to the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, strategic gaps have been identified. With vast MS expertise in SP – including in new MSs who have significantly reformed their systems – twinning has been underutilised. So, too, have global thematic programmes, including SOCIEUX, which is largely demand-driven. Regional programmes contained too few SP interventions in light of the often-shared nature of SP challenges and the importance of knowledge and experience sharing. Budget support was unavailable in IPA I beneficiaries, leading to the scattering of SP support in small (albeit by and large successful) projects; a weakness being addressed by the sector approach in IPA II.

4.3.4 Conclusion 10: Complementarity and synergy of instruments

While there has been complementarity between the instruments used by the EU to support SP and the EU has made efforts to link SP interventions to other interventions (e.g. humanitarian assistance, food security), the level of synergy achieved has remained limited. Moreover, the use of global thematic programmes to support SP been limited.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQ7.

Global programmes such as SOCIEUX were little used in the countries reviewed, which may mean SOCIEUX is more used in countries where there is no substantial EU support through geographic programmes. EU-SPS is still too recent to observe important results. Despite some evidence of social protection-related projects under EIDHR and other thematic budget lines, there has been little or no systematic linkage between SP interventions and projects financed under thematic programmes. There have been scattered linkages between SP, health, migration, refugees, and gender, but no organised efforts to link SP with, e.g., climate change via the resilience agenda.

Except when there was budget support, there has also been little linkage between social protection interventions and EU support to policy reform provided in areas such as PFM. As mentioned above, there have been some success stories in linking cash transfer programmes to humanitarian assistance.

4.3.5 Conclusion 11: Monitoring and evaluation at project and global level

At project level, the EU has established sound M&E and learning mechanisms, but some interventions lacked a result focus and there were mixed results in strengthening national M&E and statistical capacities. At global level, monitoring and learning mechanisms were hindered by limited EU institutional knowledge of its overall support to SP and the low profile of SP in EU bilateral and global strategic cooperation frameworks.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1, 5 and 7.

The EU has generally put sound M&E mechanisms in place for its support to SP, with embedded technical assistance often helping to enhance monitoring of implemented activities and learning loops. However, M&E systems were constrained by national data availability and often remained project focussed. The EU has cooperated with the World Bank and national authorities to support the development of comprehensive data systems, including national registries. But, in general, the strengthening of national M&E and statistical capacities in the area of SP was hampered by the lack of political will and resources within national partner institutions.

Having taken a broad view of SP, the evaluation team has identified a rich variety of EU interventions (social inclusion in the Western Balkans, cash transfer social assistance programmes in DCI, ENI, and EDF countries, broader support to social protection systems support in a handful of countries, etc.). Yet, the EU institutional perspective on support to SP has been weak as illustrated by the absence of a clear overview of the EU portfolio in this area and the limited cross-fertilisation between experiences from different countries/regions. Recent initiatives such as the publication of EU reference documents on SP (e.g. the 2017 DEVCO Concept Note No. 5 on the measurement of SP) are useful elements to improve monitoring of EU support to SP at a technical level. However, their impact on adopting a more strategic institutional perspective on SP across EU institutions is likely to remain limited if mobilised resources (see Conclusion 7) and the profile of SP in EU bilateral and global strategic cooperation frameworks (see Conclusion 3) stay as they are .

5 Recommendations

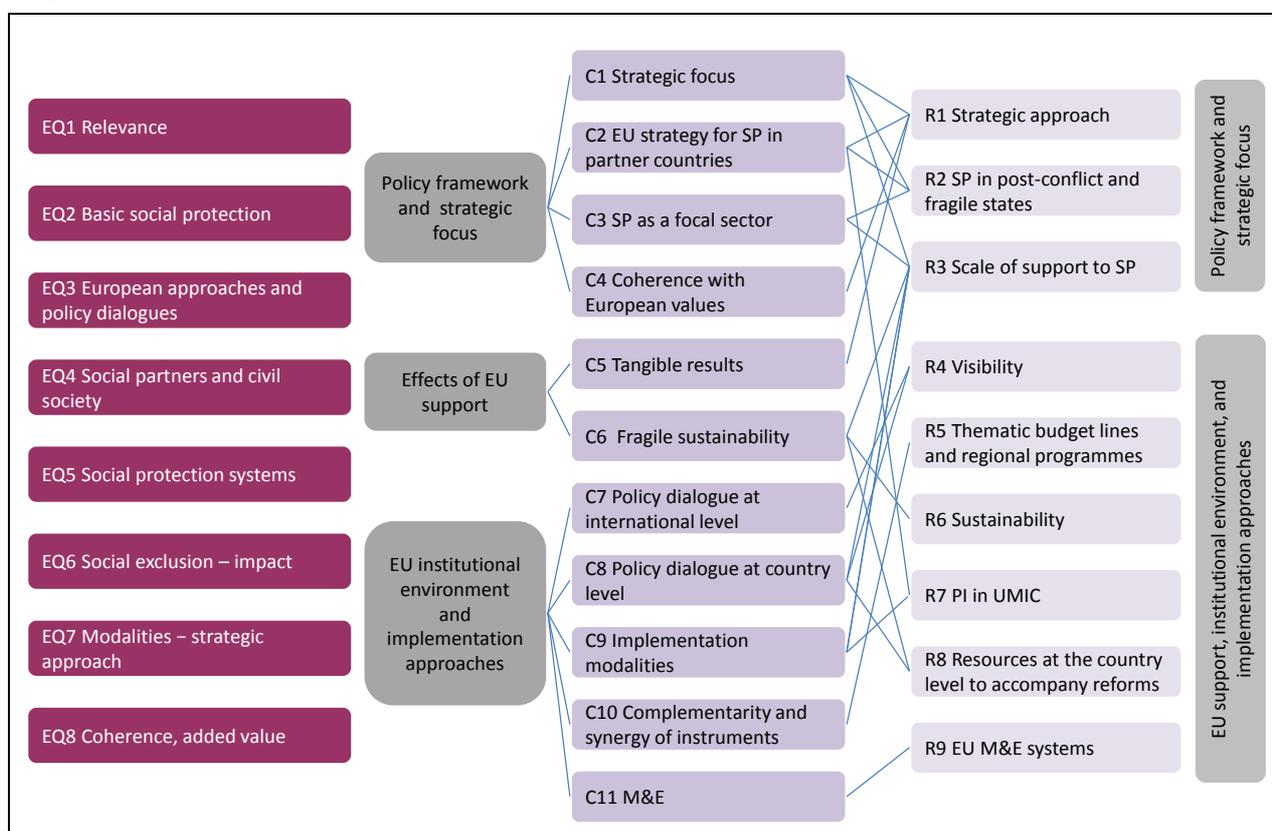
Two sets of recommendations to strengthen EU support.

The following key recommendations emerge from the conclusions. The recommendations are presented in two clusters:

- Policy framework and strategic focus – recommendations 1 to 3.
- EU support, institutional environment, and implementation approaches – recommendations 4 to 9.

The linkages between EQs (findings), conclusions and recommendations are illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 14 Major links between EQs, conclusions and recommendations



Prioritising recommendations

The table below provides an overview of the level of priority in terms of importance of the recommendations and the urgency (agenda) of their realisation. This information is also provided schematically in the figure below. Addressing these priorities requires actions by different actors. Therefore, each recommendation includes suggestions for operational steps to put it into practice, and proposes implementation responsibilities.

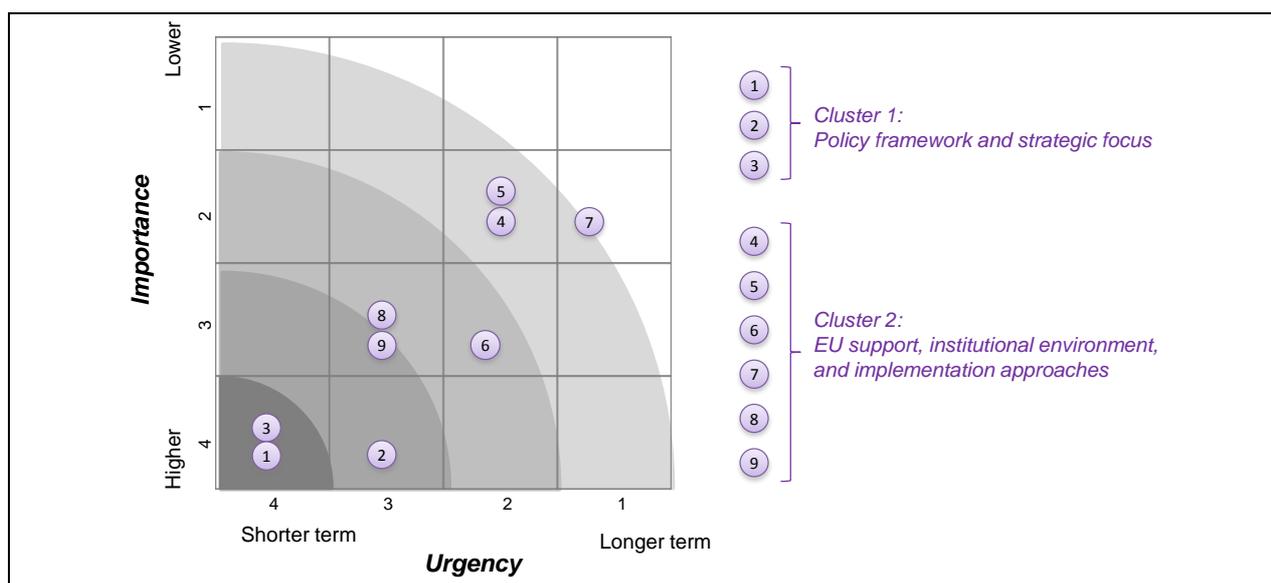
Table 3 Overview of the main recommendations

Cluster	Recommendation	Importance*	Urgency*
Policy framework and strategic focus	R1. The EU should continue to focus its social protection support on social assistance and social inclusion and at the same time promote – whenever possible – a strategic approach including social insurance schemes.	4	4
	R2. The EU should further develop SP support in post-conflict and fragile states, humanitarian emergencies, and refugee situations.	4	3
	R3. The EU should consider scaling up its support to social protection.	4	4
EU support, institutional environment, and implementation approaches.	R4. The EU should increase its visibility in international cooperation on SP.	2	2
	R5. The EU should better use thematic budget lines (human development, food security, migration, etc.) and regional programmes to complement bilateral geographic cooperation.	2	2
	R6. The EU should increase attention to sustainability in SP support.	3	2
	R7. The EU should better explore the potential of the Partnership Instrument to address social protection weaknesses in Upper Middle Income Countries and promote triangular cooperation.	2	1
	R8. EU should mobilise adequate resources at the country level to	3	3

Cluster	Recommendation	Importance*	Urgency*
	accompany SP reforms on a continuous basis and understand well the political dimension of such reform processes.		
	R9: EU should increase its support to the development of monitoring and evaluation systems tailored to the national context and institutions, with greater emphasis on understanding barriers to the effective implementation of SP schemes	3	3

* 1 = low, 4 = high

Figure 15 Prioritisation of recommendations, schematic overview



Source: Analysis Particip

5.1 Cluster 1: Policy framework and strategic focus

5.1.1 Recommendation 1: The EU should continue to focus its social protection support on social assistance and social inclusion and at the same time promote – whenever possible – a broad, reasoned, and sequenced strategic approach with due attention to sustainability, including social insurance schemes.

The EU should continue to focus its social protection support on social assistance and social inclusion. At the same time, it should step up efforts to promote a broad strategic approach which stresses the relationship between the programmes it supports and social protection as a whole, including social insurance schemes. The range of SP concerns addressed by the EU at country level has been narrower than a reading of Concept Note No. 4 would suggest is required. Reasons for selecting particular areas for action should be made clear and overall sector concerns such as sustainability of the SP policy framework as a should be better addressed (see also Recommendation 6). When SP reforms are linked to a particular sector (e.g., health), the link between SP aspects and broader sector reform should be identified and taken into account. The same holds true for sequencing, sustainability, and coherence of the overall SP policy framework. Opportunities for closer cooperation with the ILO and World Bank should be identified and pursued when possible. In DCI/EDF countries, EU's focus on social assistance and social inclusion should foresee a universal and longer term perspective strengthening social protection systems whenever possible. In many ENI countries, which inherited from the socialist era functioning social insurance systems that have become impaired by structural flaws and economic crisis, provision of EU social insurance expertise could add value. In IPA beneficiaries, increased use of twinning and the promotion of partnerships with MS institutions in the context of both IPA financial support and through policy dialogue in closely related areas such as labour codes could strengthen EU support to bring social insurance systems in line with European good practice. Throughout the EU's SP programmes, there is need for better mainstreaming of gender and the application of European gender

expertise.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusions 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG EMPL, DG ECFIN, EEAS, EUDs

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- In programming for the next MFF, all relevant actors should continue to stress the poverty aspects of SP and social inclusion. In order to promote coordination and collaboration, there should be greater efforts to interface with the ILO and World Bank and other international partners, preferably through SPIAC-B.
- At country level, the EU should support more actively the consolidation and simplification of national SP interventions to reduce overlap, ineffectiveness, and inefficiency. This could include analytical work such as mappings of social assistance programmes or participatory comprehensive sector reviews, always in collaboration with other active development partners.
- In IPA beneficiaries, effort needs to be made that accession negotiations include, where possible, discussion of how to bring existing social insurance systems in line with European good practice. The weakening of social insurance systems leads to an increasing burden on social assistance measures, impairing the latter's sustainability. Social insurance systems often do not provide anything close to a subsistence amount. Closely related legislative areas, such as labour codes and anti-discrimination statutes, should be analysed through the social protection lens. While DG EMPL provided some support in these areas, there should be closer coordination with IPA- and ENI-supported initiatives.
- As IPA support is very demand driven, EU advocacy for giving more importance to SP is needed to achieve better balance with other priority areas such as rule of law, PAR, etc.
- In ENI countries, specific support needs (including TA) in social insurance reform should be identified and discussed with partner governments.
- In DCI and EDF countries, emphasis should be on long-term development of effective and sustainable social protection systems. If implemented, this recommendation would have consequence for SP capacity in DG DEVCO.
- When the EU supports specific social insurance schemes in middle income countries, such as Morocco (health), actions should be linked to broader sector reforms. In Upper Middle Income Countries, where the EU has been largely absent, the example of China where the Partnership Instrument has been used to support continuing SP reforms should be followed.
- EU support to SP reform should generally be more closely linked with PFM reform, including adding indicators on SP system performance assessment frameworks.
- Twinning experiences have been positive when used, especially between SP agencies in MS and ENI countries. Twinning programmes and exchange of experiences could be promoted between MS public administrations in charge of SP and relevant administrations from third countries.
- Overall, the 2015 DEVCO Concept Paper No. 4 on SP should be relied on to provide guidance for programming and design in the context of external support.
- EU expertise in gender should be applied to promote the mainstreaming of gender in all SP interventions.

5.1.2 Recommendation 2: The EU should further develop SP support in post-conflict and fragile states, humanitarian emergencies, and refugee situations.

In line with the stated goal of better differentiation, the EU should continue to work on developing approaches to social protection that are appropriate in post-conflict and fragile states, including the better integration of social protection and humanitarian assistance.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusions 1, 2, and 3.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, ECHO, EUDs

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Issues of timing and financing cycles will need to be addressed – SP is a continuing state responsibility whereas humanitarian assistance is typically a focused donor emergency intervention.
- Conceptual work at DG DEVCO should continue in collaboration with ECHO, especially on developing financing procedures and joint decision-making processes which enhance integration of social protection support and humanitarian assistance.
- Concrete steps should be taken to ensure that displaced persons and refugees are covered by EU-supported schemes. Close consultations with governments, development partners, and civil society groups will be needed to identify appropriate actions.
- ECHO-DEVCO work should seek to mainstream vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities.
- Appropriate attention should be paid to the potentially important contribution of SP to government legitimation and state-building.
- Further work should be pursued on merging databases, using IT and mobile telephony, e-banking, etc. to effectively target marginalised populations and reach them with payments and services.

5.1.3 Recommendation 3: The EU should consider scaling up its support to social protection.

If the EU wishes to make a serious impact in the SP area, it will need to consider larger programmes, probably in the form of budget support or programmes supporting sector-wide approaches, and more actively advocate for increased fiscal space for SP at the national level. If it does not scale up resources devoted and systematize its support in the area, there is a danger that its portfolio will consist of scattered actions which have an immediate impact, but fail to achieve institutional stability and fail after international donor support is withdrawn. In addition, as SP is a cross-cutting concern, it should be incorporated into related policy dialogues, e.g. trade and migration.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusions 1, 3, 6, 8, and 9.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG ECFIN, EEAS.

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- In moving towards budget support, the EU will require dialogue with partners to assess their needs and priorities and approaches to develop sector policies / strategic framework.
- Within the EU itself, there needs to be further discussion of the place of SP within the priority list in the current and upcoming MFF.
- Projects like EU-SPS could provide a platform for such dialogue by allowing the EU to mobilise a network of experts without necessarily expanding HQ or EUD staffing in the area of social protection. Similarly, SOCIEUX could provide situation analyses and contribute to programme design. Facilities like the ASiST programme on social cash transfers should be continued and better linked to other SP-related global programmes. These programmes are essentially demand driven and such support will need to result from advocacy and policy dialogue on the EU side.
- In IPA beneficiaries, despite the fact that SP is not a focal sector, support to it should be mainstreamed through support to other sectors (e.g. PAR/PFM). Support to programme budgeting should include discussions on budgeting for vulnerable groups, women, etc.

5.2 Cluster 2: EU support, institutional environment, and implementation approaches

5.2.1 Recommendation 4: The EU should increase its visibility in international cooperation on SP.

If the EU wishes to make a serious impact in international SP discussions, it will require higher visibility. This could be achieved by increasing its contribution to international policy dialogue on social protection, building on its comparative expertise in social assistance, social inclusion, and humanitarian assistance. EU external visibility requires that it leverage its presence by structured consultation and coordination during programming and implementation among EC services, EEAS and EU MS.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusions 7 and 8.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG EMPL, DG ECFIN, DG SANTE, EEAS, EU MSs

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Carry out a comprehensive mapping of its support to SP with the view of better highlighting: i/ the distinctive features of its portfolio (compared to other development partners active in this area); ii/ the rich variety of experiences covered by its support and the potential for learning this represents.
- Do an in-house inventory of human resources and staff skills related to SP. Identify gaps and fill them.
- Increase level of involvement in SPIAC-B, including advocating for needed governance reforms.
- Improve level of coordination between DG EMPL, responsible for formal social insurance systems tied to employment (of particular importance in the IPA context), and DGs DEVCO and NEAR.
- In IPA beneficiaries, where social protection is covered within the wider sector policy, there should be more clear visibility of specific support to SP policies.
- Thematic and regional programmes should be better used to support stakeholders in regional and global fora, thus improving EU visibility.

5.2.2 Recommendation 5: The EU should better use thematic budget lines (human development, food security, migration, etc.) and regional programmes to complement bilateral geographic cooperation.

The EU should take better advantage of thematic (in addition to SOCIEUX and EU-SPS) and regional programmes to promote knowledge sharing and regional peer-to-peer exchanges. Social protection has a pronounced regional character, with shared demographic and economic challenges, shared approaches to SP inherited from the past, and shared needs for reform. As SP is a technical field, the sharing of experiences and policy responses can play a crucial role.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusion 10.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EUDs, EEAS

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Include SP aspects in thematic calls for proposals, RSPs, and RIPs. This could include broadening the subject range of calls and allocating part of the budget in broader activity areas to SP.
- Use regional and thematic programmes to promote the formation of regional knowledge networks, exchanges of experience and expertise, and triangular cooperation.
- In Africa, support to the African Union to ensure development of appropriate SP policies for the continent should be continued. This should consist both of continued direct support to the Social Affairs Department at the African Union Commission (AUC) in Addis, but also to the functioning

of regional networks of expertise under AU coordination.

- The possible contribution of Horizon 2020 research funding to the field of SP should be explored.
- Examine possibilities for cooperation with the International Social Security Association (the international body representing national social security institutes) and its regional affiliates.

5.2.3 Recommendation 6: The EU should increase attention to sustainability in social protection support.

In all social protection actions, greater emphasis should be given to early and continuing dialogue with partner governments on the transition to national financing (see also Recommendation 1). TA related to fiscal sustainability should be provided from the programming stage forward. Moreover, social assistance schemes supported by the EU should contain elements related to economic empowerment with the goal of eventually moving recipients into decent work, thus relieving budgetary pressure on the scheme. On the social insurance front, the EU needs to be in closer contact with the private sector.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusion 6.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, DG EMPL

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Through SOCIEUX and EU-SPS, the EU has access to a well-developed network on European experts on financial sustainability aspects of social protection schemes, if the demand for their expertise can be stimulated.
- Alternatively, the EU may consider financing analyses by the ILO or World Bank.
- Raise European Parliamentary interest SP programmes (e.g. organising joint visits at the local level) to raise the political attention given to SP.
- Involve a wider range of stakeholders in the partner countries, like political parties, civil society, social partners and the private sector.

5.2.4 Recommendation 7: The EU should better explore the potential of the Partnership Instrument to address social protection weaknesses in Upper Middle Income Countries and promote triangular cooperation.

Looked at in sheer numbers of the poor, there is more poverty in Middle Income Countries than Low Income ones. In many Upper Middle Income Countries, social protection systems are seriously deficient. Other countries, such as Mexico and Brazil, have been the source of some of the most innovative and widely copied social assistance schemes. As the EU tries to better address cooperation with graduated countries in the new MFF using the PI, it should consider social protection as a PI focal area, including promoting triangular cooperation.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusions 2 and 9.

Main implementation responsibility: EEAS

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Place SP on the agenda in designing PI APs.
- Examine the example of regional programmes that promote South-South and triangular cooperation (e.g., EUROsociAL to build regional networks of social security institutes).

5.2.5 Recommendation 8: The EU should mobilise adequate resources at country level to accompany social protection reforms on a continuous basis and understand well the political dimension of such reform processes.

Countries where the EU has added substantial value in SP have been those in which there was continued, long-term policy dialogue at country level. Under such circumstances, the EU has been perceived as a neutral external partner facilitating the dialogue between national institutions involved in SP reform. Therefore, the EU should mobilise adequate resources for its structures at country level to

accompany SP reforms.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusions 6 and 8.

Main implementation responsibility: EEAS

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- Put increased emphasis on recruiting staff with good knowledge of the local context in EUD to support EUD engagement in policy dialogue and enhance the understanding of political dynamics.
- Carry out regular political economy analysis either in the context of formulation of new programmes or ad hoc initiatives.
- Continue participation in donor coordination efforts.
- More actively involve MS in the EU external action in SP. Complement and leverage EU expertise via MS TA, exchange of experiences, twinning programmes, etc.

5.2.6 Recommendation 9: The EU should increase efforts to support the development of monitoring and evaluation systems tailored to the national context and institutions, with greater emphasis on understanding barriers to the effective implementation of SP schemes

M&E systems need to be adjusted to reflect institutional realities in SP. Standard western SP models may not be suitable for achieving institutional ownership and buy-in. Moreover, M&E has been heavily oriented towards the development of sophisticated databases, resulting in a bias towards detailed quantitative data. The EU should work with national partners to support them in developing national M&E systems appropriate to their context and institutions, and continue increasing the attention given in M&E activities to assessing performance from an outcome rather than a process perspective. This requires not only assessing quantitative indicators, but carrying out in-depth qualitative analyses to understand beneficiaries' perceptions and attitudes towards SP schemes.

This recommendation is mainly linked to conclusion 11.

Main implementation responsibility: DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EUDs

The implementation of this recommendation would involve the following:

- The main requirements for implementing an effective and sustainable M&E system at national level are financial resources and political will. In SP policy dialogue, the EU should stress the need for substantial financial resources devoted to M&E and generally promote an M&E culture.
- M&E systems need to be adjusted to reflect institutional realities in SP. Standard western SP models may not be suitable for achieving institutional ownership and buy-in. As evidenced by data gaps experienced during the evaluation, they may also be impractical in some settings.
- The EU may wish to focus its efforts on project-level M&E systems taking care to make them open/compatible enough so as to prepare a potential future integration into broader information systems.
- The EU should continue increasing the attention given in M&E activities to assessing performance from an outcome rather than a process perspective. This requires not only assessing quantitative indicators, but carrying out in-depth qualitative analyses as well, e.g. on beneficiaries' attitudes towards social assistance delivery mechanisms, and on needs at community level.