



Council of the
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	5 June 2020
To:	Delegations

No. prev. doc.:	8305/20
Subject:	2019 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2018 - Council conclusions (5 June 2020)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the 2019 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2018, approved by written procedure on 5 June 2020.

**2019 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for
financing external actions in 2018**

Council conclusions

1. The Council welcomes the Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions in 2018¹ as a key contribution to inform citizens and stakeholders on how the EU implements its external assistance and the results achieved. The Council recognises the efforts by the Commission services and the European External Action Service to continue to improve the quality, result-orientation and user-friendliness of the report and calls on them to maintain those efforts.
2. The Council calls for the reinforcement of an EU 'Shared Vision' and 'Common Action' and 'Working Better Together' as advocated in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy and in line with the New European Consensus on Development, including the advancement towards a more credible, responsive, inclusive and joined-up Union. The Council requests the Commission to report on the financial and non-financial modalities of joint action by EU and Member States. Furthermore, the Council reiterates its request for forthcoming annual reports to include reporting on implementation by type of implementation partners, as referenced in the Financial Regulation², as well as by type of instruments (to specifically include detailed information on budget support, blending operations, loans and guarantees).

¹ 14585/19 and ADD 1+2 - COM(2019) 604 final and SWD(2019) 409 final.

² Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, Article 62 para 1 point c), OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p.58.

3. The Council recalls the EU and its Member States' commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Change Agreement through coordinated and coherent action. The EU and its Member States must respond to current global challenges and opportunities, address inequalities and ensure that no-one is left behind, in line with the 2030 Agenda. The Council welcomes progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented in the Annual Report and in the EU Joint Synthesis Report and showcased at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.
4. The Council stresses the importance of promoting immediate action on environmental degradation and climate change and their impacts on global food systems and increasing levels of food insecurity, and calls for continued efforts to strengthen and increase climate co-benefits, which should be monitored adequately. The Council also calls for continued efforts on climate change mitigation and adaptation in EU external actions, including in the most vulnerable countries, that is Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Furthermore, the Council highlights the importance of reporting on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and of strengthening resilience and preparedness to address climate-induced extreme weather, floods and droughts.
5. The Council welcomes actions taken in cooperation with partner countries to address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, as well as other actions related to migration challenges, in line with all pillars of the Valletta Joint Action Plan and requests future Annual reports to address progress towards those objectives.

6. The Council reiterates the commitment by the EU and its Member States to promote effective rules-based multilateralism with the United Nations at its core. The Council supports the full implementation of ongoing reforms undertaken to enable the multilateral system to face present and future challenges and to boost cooperation and partnerships with regional organisations. It highlights that the EU and its Member States remain the largest contributor to the UN. The Council reiterates the commitment of the EU and its Member States to work towards a more strategic approach to quality voluntary funding by the EU and its Member States for key UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies and prioritise predictable, multi-annual support for multi-agency actions by the UN, including through core funding and interagency pooled funds, where appropriate.
7. The Council commends the implementation of the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy to support and foster stability, security and prosperity in the EU Neighbourhood and to develop a special relationship and strong partnerships with countries to the east and south. The Council has taken note of the Commission's Western Balkans Strategy of February 2018 and reiterates the EU's unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkans.
8. The Council also recognises the particular challenges faced by developing countries in Africa and, in this respect, underlines the importance of targeting ODA to the continent, while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities in development assistance. The Council welcomes the renewed impetus injected by the African Union-EU Summit held in November 2017. In this context, it reiterates the importance of the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs launched in 2018, aimed at boosting investment, attracting more private investors, extending trade, improving the business climate, and supporting education and skills for employment. The Alliance represents a radical shift away from a donor-recipient relationship to a partnership of equals. The Council positively notes the steps taken to strengthen the strategic partnership with Africa, especially in LDCs and countries in situations of fragility and conflict.

9. The EU and its Member States reaffirm all their individual and collective ODA commitments. The Council recalls that ODA remains a major source of finance for LDCs and fragile states, which particularly lack domestic capacity to raise finance from other sources. The Council also recalls that, in accordance with the new European Consensus on Development, while fully respecting individual Member States' priorities, the development cooperation of the EU and its Member States should be targeted where the need is greatest and where it can have most impact, especially in LDCs and in situations of fragility and conflict.
10. The Council calls on the Commission to pay attention to the specific challenges of countries graduating from low-income status, to engage in development cooperation, policy dialogue and partnerships with Middle Income Countries (MICs) on sustainable development, poverty eradication, income inequalities, protracted refugee crises and other areas of shared interests and to further develop innovative engagement with More Advanced Developing Countries (MADCs), in all regions, including Latin America and Asia, in line with the New European Consensus on Development. These countries are key for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and, as major economies, their impact on global public goods and challenges, including climate change, is increasingly significant.
11. The Council reaffirms the commitment by the EU and its Member States to support human rights, democracy, good governance and the rule of law worldwide and commends all efforts to further promote and strengthen these through EU external action, including by empowering and investing in the capacities of local actors and civil society organisations and ensuring an enabling environment for civil society. The Council also reiterates the critical importance of a rights-based approach to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights and promoting and defending civil society space and calls on all partners, including the UN, to apply such a rights-based approach in programming.

12. The Council stresses the importance of gender equality and reiterates the EU's commitment to promoting women and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and their empowerment in external relations in line with the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (GAP II). The Council notes with satisfaction that the proportion of EU funded cooperation and development initiatives promoting gender equality (as a principal or significant objective) has risen to 68% and calls for a more focused and joint effort by all implementing actors in order to reach the GAP II target of 85%. The Council recognises the importance of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls and calls for consistent involvement of EU Member States. The Council recalls that the EU is committed to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences. The Council invites the Commission to take the opportunity of their 25th anniversary to assess lessons learned over the past 25 years and incorporate these into the new GAP III to further strengthen EU efforts to advance SDG 5.
13. The Council welcomes the efforts to provide needs-based, life-saving assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises, including protracted crises, throughout the world and highlights the importance of working in line with humanitarian principles and the OECD/DAC recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus to prevent and address effectively situations of conflict and crisis. Furthermore, the Council commends the Union Civil Protection Mechanism for its timely and effective assistance in the aftermath of sudden-onset crises and disasters.
14. The EU's Integrated Approach has facilitated more coherent and holistic engagement spanning the diplomatic, security and defence, including CSDP missions and operations, development cooperation and humanitarian assistance fields. The Council welcomes progress achieved with regard to the strengthening of resilience, conflict prevention, crisis management and stabilisation abroad and the efforts on capacity building for security and development.

15. The Council welcomes the implementation of the External Investment Plan (EIP) aimed at encouraging private investors to contribute to climate action, sustainable development and job creation in partner countries in Africa and the European Neighbourhood. The Council notes efforts to unlock sustainable investments for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, highlighting the importance of social, environmental and human rights safeguards. Furthermore, the Council stresses the need to improve the investment climate in partner countries, in line with the third pillar of the EIP. The Council calls for a timely publication of the evaluation of the EFSD and underlines the need to integrate lessons learned from this instrument.
16. The Council also reiterates that Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is a fundamental part of EU's contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in a more effective way. In this regard, the Council welcomes efforts to integrate PCD reporting into the overall EU reporting on the SDGs.
17. The Council commends the Commission for the steps taken in the area of Digitalisation for Development (D4D) and emphasises the great potential of digitalisation as an enabler and accelerator for sustainable development. The Council encourages the Commission to redouble efforts to bridge the digital divides within and between countries and to assist public authorities in implementing an enabling regulatory framework.
18. The Council recalls its conclusions on 'A Revised EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework'³ and welcomes the alignment of the revised EU Results Framework with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as with the new European Consensus on Development. In this context, the Council encourages the Commission to make further efforts to include a reflection on results in its reporting.
19. The Council welcomes the Commission's engagement to improve its strategic communication and outreach on development cooperation, for instance through the EU Development Communication Network. In this regard, it encourages the Commission to continue its efforts to improve visibility, information and communication towards young people, both in and outside the Union.

³ 14553/18