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Mid-term evaluation of the Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries

Accompanying the document

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Mid-term review report of the External Financing Instruments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Staff Working Document evaluates the performance of the Partnership Instrument at its mid-term, covering the period from January 2014 to June 2017.

Background: The Partnership Instrument was designed to fill a gap in the European Union's external actions by providing the ability to pursue cooperation in the European Union (EU) interest or of mutual interest with partner countries. Building on more limited previous experiments with the Instrument for cooperation with industrialised countries, in 2014 the Partnership Instrument was intended to innovate by being made of world-wide application, explicitly not subject to requirements for official development assistance (ODA), and charged with the task of promoting cooperation and alliance-building on issues of EU or mutual interest and challenges of global concern. It is designed for the EU as a global actor partnering with third countries - notably middle-income countries and in particular strategic partners - on a peer-to-peer basis.

The Partnership Instrument is a policy-supporting instrument strengthening the EU by promoting its interests, values and visibility externally. It operates under the framework defined by the Global Strategy in support of EU foreign policy objectives. The Partnership Instrument is the only thematic instrument in Heading 4 that specialises in articulating the external dimension of internal policies. It thus brings coherence and adds value to the EU's action internally and externally, by interconnecting policy areas (e.g. climate/energy). Actions cover challenges of global concern like climate change and environmental protection; enhancing widespread understanding and visibility of the EU and of its role on the world scene by means of public diplomacy; the international dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and growth; improving access to markets and boosting trade, investment and business opportunities for EU companies (with particular emphasis on SMEs). This responds to the calls to strengthen the nexus between internal and external policies expressed in the EU Global Strategy and the reflection papers on the future of the EU. A key focus of Partnership Instrument actions is therefore support for, and follow-up to, trade negotiations, policy dialogues and bilateral and regional summits, international fora and alliance-building.

Relevance – fitness for purpose: The evaluation shows that the Partnership Instrument is fit for purpose¹. It has proven its relevance to long standing EU priorities. Its actions reflected the different strands of the strategic framework of the EU's external actions as well as the Commission's 10 priorities; also, they prefigured, and supported, the EU Global Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Developments Goals). The key element of fitness for purpose is its flexibility and its ability to adapt to the new and changed policy priorities that have arisen since its adoption. This flexibility is due to the design of the instrument, in particular the adaptability and global application of its programming. To date, four Annual Action Programmes (AAPs) have been adopted comprising a total of 77 actions targeted at particular policy needs and interests articulated by the Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS). All stakeholders, including EU Member States and outside stakeholders, have confirmed during the evaluation process their broad satisfaction with the instrument's performance. Programming in two different phases, allows

¹ "Fit for purpose" means achieving the objectives for which the instrument was designed, Article 17 Common Implementation Regulation."

for a faster response to changing agendas. Not being tied geographically to particular countries or regions, the Partnership Instrument has successfully achieved its objective of global reach: while actions implemented in strategic partner countries represent over half of the budget so far, nearly the same amount represents multi-country/regional/global actions which include other partner countries.

Its flexibility is also due to the choices made on its implementation, notably rapid-response tools, such as the "Policy Support Facility"² (PSF) and the "Technical Assistance and Information Exchange"³ (TAIEX). By June 2017, 98 actions have been implemented through PSF and 59 actions through TAIEX. Despite their limited size in terms of budget and duration, these facilities have proven to be key in responding in a tailored way and with the necessary flexibility and rapidity, to emerging political priorities, and in seizing windows of opportunity for advancing agendas and building alliances by providing necessary expertise and technical assistance.

Effectiveness and impact: The Partnership Instrument has been effective in delivering results. It is on track towards reaching its objectives and is ahead of the overall EU target as regards spending on climate action. However, more attention needs to be paid to the mainstreaming within Partnership Instrument actions of overarching themes (like gender). The decision-making process has evolved towards an even greater concentration on strategic EU priorities like the Juncker Commission's 10 priorities along with the EU Global Strategy, and the Sustainable Development Goals. This requires Partnership Instrument actions to be fully concentrated on achieving meaningful policy impacts. In this respect some aspects need further improvement: increasing provision of resources and input by policy-making services to ensure they are fully involved in designing, programming and implementing the actions; enhancing the active role of EU delegations in the formulation of actions; improving in the remaining implementation period the visibility of Partnership Instrument actions, especially within the EU institutions but also externally; and realising the full potential of actions through better follow-up.

Some measures were already taken. For example, the Commission services recently concentrated resources in regional teams to better manage Partnership Instrument actions in EU delegations; to provide more support to delegations for projects under their remit; and to stimulate a more active participation of delegations in the design of Partnership Instrument actions. Furthermore, in recognition of the fact that the design and implementation of Partnership Instrument actions require a high level of involvement Commission services responsible for different policies and from the EEAS, actions to be included in the annual programme are prepared by "policy clusters" of relevant experts. Securing sufficient provision of resources and input from Commission and EEAs policy-making services and their full involvement from design, through programming to implementation is a continuing challenge. Further reflection is underway to link the Partnership Instrument programming more closely to the policy guidance emanating from the project teams under the Commission's Vice Presidents.

The awareness and visibility of the Partnership Instrument has been identified as one of the main weaknesses limiting its use and application, as only those services best acquainted with

² Short-term technical assistance provided by private consultancies.

³ Short-term technical expertise provided by expert working in Member States public authorities.

it propose most priorities and design most actions. In terms of external visibility, Member States expressed their interest in receiving more details on Partnership Instrument actions and emphasised the need for an increase of information sharing, notably for better coordination between the EU and Member States in partner countries. In response the Commission services have stepped up its efforts to present information to Council geographical working groups and within the responsible Partnership Instrument Committee.

Efficiency: The external evaluation and stakeholder consultation confirmed that implementation of the instrument is considered to be adaptive, efficient and flexible and it is able to react particularly fast to emerging needs.

Monitoring and evaluation processes presented weaknesses during the initial implementation of the instrument, but a monitoring and evaluation framework has now been consolidated to ensure better performance and impact data in the future.

EU added value: The Partnership Instrument demonstrates its added value being the only instrument which can be deployed globally and which explicitly pursues EU interests, and mutual interests with partner countries. There is consensus that the EU level is the most appropriate for action in Partnership Instrument fields of intervention. Withdrawing Partnership Instrument support would reduce the ability of the EU to pursue partnerships with a wide range of partner countries, failing to live up to its bilateral and international commitments as well as to the partners' expectations.

Coherence, complementarity: The processes put in place by the Commission service managing the instrument ensure an inclusive and coordinated approach to programming and implementation which reinforces the coherence of Partnership Instrument actions. In this sense, a good degree of complementarity exists with interventions by Member States, with some examples of good practice of coordination taking place between the EU delegations and Member States' embassies in third countries where Partnership Instrument actions are implemented. Overall, Member States and the Commission services/EEAS agree on the added value Partnership Instrument interventions bring to EU cooperation / dialogue with partner countries.

The Partnership Instrument is found to be externally and internally coherent by design. Inclusive and participatory decision-making processes have ensured that in its implementation, it facilitates coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies both internally (with other policies) and externally (with stakeholders and partner countries).

Leverage: Financial leverage is not a requirement and has occurred only to a limited extent. On the other hand, the political and policy leverage is directly inscribed in the design of the Partnership Instrument. Since its creation the Partnership Instrument has acted as an enabler, opening up areas for political and policy dialogue and cooperation.

Conclusion: The conclusions of the evaluation will feed into the reflection on how to further refine the implementation of the Partnership Instrument for the remaining period until 2020, and on the future set of External Financing Instruments for the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

This Staff Working Document presents the results of the mid-term evaluation of the Partnership Instrument⁴ (PI) 2014-2020. The evaluation assesses whether the PI is fit for purpose, based on its performance to-date, to deliver on its objective of advancing and promoting the EU's and mutual interests. Its purpose is to inform future work on the instrument and its actions. In particular, this evaluation, which is part of a set of ten evaluations covering all the EU External Financing Instruments⁵, informs the Mid-Term Review Report⁶, which draws conclusions across all External Financing Instruments.

This document is based on an external evaluation carried out by independent consultants (see Annex 5) and on an open public consultation which gathered views of stakeholders (see Annex 2).

1.2 Scope of the evaluation

The temporal scope of the evaluation corresponds to the requirements for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) Report set out in Article 17 of the Common Implementation Regulation (CIR)⁷ i.e. it focuses on the period January 2014 to June 2017.

In order to usefully feed into the MTR report, the evaluation is set at instrument level. Due to the novelty of the PI, the focus has not only been on the PI Regulation, but also on the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for the period 2014-2017 and on concrete actions contained in the Annual Action Programmes (AAPs). The evaluator as part of their task also conducted additional evaluations on a sample of actions covering all four specific objectives of the PI and the main regions covered by the instrument. This meant that the evaluation of the instrument was backed by evidence collected on its real performance.

The countries covered by the evaluation are those eligible under the PI regulation (see section 2.1 and 2.2) with a particular focus on 6 countries in which action-level evaluations took place: Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Mexico and the United States of America.

In accordance with the EU Better Regulation Guidelines⁸ and the Common Implementing Regulation (CIR)⁹, the following evaluation criteria are used: **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, added value and leverage**.

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 234/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries (later referred to as "PI Regulation").

⁵ The Development Cooperation Instrument, the 11th European Development Fund which is outside of the EU budget, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the Greenland Decision, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, the Instrument on Nuclear Safety Cooperation, the Overseas Countries and Territories Decision, the Partnership Instrument and the Common Implementing Regulation. For the purpose of this exercise, the evaluation of the Overseas Countries and Territories Decision is included within the evaluation of the 11th European Development Fund.

⁶ As requested in Article 17 of the Common Implementing Regulation, Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014, OJ L77, p. 95.

⁷ Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014.

⁸ Commission Communication Better Regulation for Better Results – An EU Agenda, COM (2015) 215, and Commission Staff Working Document Better Regulation guidelines, SWD (2015) 111.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE INITIATIVE

The External Financing Instruments form part of the Multiannual Financial Framework's¹¹ Heading IV "Global Europe"¹² which provides the EU with the tools necessary to reinforce its role on the world stage and to ensure that it is able to live up to its ambitions in promoting its interests and universal values and principles such as democracy, human rights, peace, solidarity, stability and poverty reduction and to help safeguard global public goods.

Adopted in early 2014, the External Financing Instruments (EFIs) were designed to facilitate and support policy implementation, with the intention of remaining relevant for the entire duration of the 2014-2020 Multi-annual Financial Framework thereby enabling the EU to implement external action policy as needed within the defined principles and objectives.

2.1 Description of the PI and its objectives

The Partnership Instrument is one of the key innovations in Heading IV specifically designed **to advance and promote EU and mutual interests** (as an overall objective). It was designed as a direct response to a changing international context, with the emergence of new actors and the evolution of the EU's relations with third countries and the growing need for new partnerships with countries of strategic interest.

With this changing context in mind, the PI is innovative in both scope and objectives. Namely, it has a mandate to expand cooperation partnerships and policy dialogues to areas and subjects beyond development cooperation,¹³ and to support EU policies as well as address challenges of global concern in this context of new partnerships and emerging actors, including at the regional (subnational) and urban authority levels. It builds on experience gained with the Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialised Countries (ICI)¹⁴ but with a broader policy scope and global application. The PI was designed to be **flexible** to respond to

Table 1: Heading IV Global Europe 2014-2020¹⁰

	€ millions
Development Cooperation Instrument	19 662
European Neighbourhood Instrument	15 433
Instrument for Pre-accession assistance	11 699
Humanitarian aid	6 622
Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace	2 339
Common Foreign and Security Policy	2 339
Margin	2 286
Agencies, EU Aid Volunteers, Emergency Response Centre and others	1 396
European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights	1 333
Guarantee fund for External actions	1 193
Partnership Instrument	955
Macro-financial Assistance	565
Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation	225
Greenland	218
EDF	30 506

⁹ Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 95–108.

¹⁰ The Multi-annual Financial Framework is divided into six broad groups of expenditure called "Headings". The EFIs make up the majority of Heading IV: Global Europe. External Financing Instruments highlighted in blue. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/index_en.cfm.

¹¹ Council Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020, OJ L 347/884, p. 884.

¹² The Multi-annual Financial Framework is divided into six broad groups of expenditure called "Headings". The EFIs make up the majority of Heading IV: Global Europe.

¹³ There is no mandatory requirement for PI spending to qualify as official development assistance.

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) No 1934/2006 of the Council of 21 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for cooperation with industrialised and other high-income countries and territories, OJ L 405/41, 30 December 2016.

global challenges and to the fast-changing nature of relations with partner countries, e.g. to rapidly underwrite EU agreements reached at summits with concrete supporting actions under the PI's remit. To contribute to the overall objective, the PI finances actions in line with the following four specific objectives (Article 1(2)a-d of the PI Regulation):

- Supporting the Union's bilateral, regional and inter-regional cooperation partnership strategies by promoting policy dialogue and by developing collective approaches and responses to challenges of global concern;
- Implementing the international dimension of "Europe 2020"¹⁵ strategy;
- Improving access to partner country markets and boosting trade, investment and business opportunities for companies from the Union, while eliminating barriers to market access and investment, by means of economic partnerships, business and regulatory cooperation;
- Enhancing widespread understanding and visibility of the Union and of its role on the world scene by means of public diplomacy, people-to-people contacts, cooperation in educational and academic matters, think-tank cooperation and outreach activities to promote the Union's values and interests.

2.2 Geographical focus and programming principles

The PI has a **global reach** and is intended to address issues and challenges at global, regional and bilateral level. Given the wide scope and relatively limited financial envelope (EUR 954 million), the first **Multiannual Indicative Programme for the period 2014-2017**¹⁶ further specifies a focus on both established (Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States) and emerging (Brazil, China, India and Mexico)¹⁷ **strategic partners** and **other countries of strategic interest to the EU**, including countries that are no longer eligible for bilateral development aid (so called *graduated countries*¹⁸). *De facto*, the PI is deployed mainly in the regions of Asia-Pacific, the Americas, the Gulf as well as Russia and Central Asia as illustrated by indicative financial allocations set out in the MIP (see table 2 below). Despite the focus defined in the MIP, the PI maintains its ability to intervene anywhere in the world where needed, based on the EU's interests and policy agendas.

¹⁵ Commission Communication, COM/2010/2020, Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52010DC2020>.

¹⁶ C(2014)4453 final, Commission implementing decision of 3.7.2014 on the adoption of the first multiannual indicative programme for the period 2014-2017 under the Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries.

¹⁷ All EU strategic partners are under focus except for South Africa, which is still benefitting from development assistance from the EU.

¹⁸ Graduated countries are those already on sustained growth paths and/or able to generate enough own resources, which will result in less or no EU development grant and the pursuit of a new relationship/partnership with the EU. Communication from the European Commission: Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, COM(2011) 637 final, 13.10.2011.

Table 2: Indicative financial allocations 2014-2020 (EUR million, MIP)¹⁹

Specific objectives	Obj. 1	Obj. 2	Obj. 3		Obj. 4		Totals (without 4.1)*	Totals
Priorities	1	2	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2		
Asia-Pacific	142	68	75	45	35	35	365	400
Americas	126	60	55	25	33	29	295	328
Russia, Central Asia & Arctic	51	10	20	5	14	19	105	119
Gulf Countries	12	3	2	2	6	2	21	27
Total per priority	331	141	152	77	88*	85	786	874
Total per specific objective	331	141	229		173		786	874
Reserve							48.2	
Total Operational Appropriations							834.2	922.2
Total administrative support							38.2	
Grand total PI-MIP							872.4	960.4

Source: MIP

(*) EUR 88 million of the total PI amount has been inscribed for the promotion of the international dimension of higher education through the Erasmus+ Programme. The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of funds allocated to this programme is governed by Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014, not by the PI Regulation, and is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

According to the MIP (p. 11), the need for complementarity of Partnership actions with other EFIs is particularly emphasised as regards the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)²⁰, European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)²¹ and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II)²². For the latter two, the MIP defines complementarity in negative terms, i.e. for countries covered by these instruments the PI would *a priori* not support bilateral cooperation. Careful articulation needs to be assured in particular with the DCI's thematic "Global Public Goods and Challenges" (GPGC) programme. Nevertheless, while thematic programmes of the DCI mainly contribute to its primary objective of poverty eradication in the long term, the PI is intended to advance and promote EU and mutual interests. Therefore, although global challenges (e.g. climate change, energy, environment) are not to be addressed by the PI from a development perspective it does not exclude PI action (in the pursuit of EU - and mutual – interests) where this cannot be done thematically or quickly by the DCI. As regards the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)²³ and the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)²⁴, the MIP (p. 11) states that the PI may act in synergy with them, if appropriate. This is fully consistent with the formers' legal basis.

The MIP sets out further principles for programming: maintain a thematic approach (rather than country-focused) to programming in line with the four PI specific objectives; focus on first identifying EU's interests in the countries of strategic importance to the EU and only

¹⁹ The calculations in the section below (share by objective) exclude priority 4.1, funds allocated to the Erasmus+ Programme, as well as reserve funds and administrative support provisions.

²⁰ Regulation (EU) No 233/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation for the period 2014-2020, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 44–76.

²¹ Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 27–43.

²² Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 11–26.

²³ Regulation (EU) No 235/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 85–94.

²⁴ Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace, OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 1–10.

then, identifying concrete actions to promote them; avoid excessive fragmentation of activities in order to maximise impact; and establish an appropriate degree of flexibility to allow for effective response to changing environments. All these aspects are covered by the evaluation.

2.3 Intervention logic of the Partnership Instrument

The **intervention logic** (IL) of the Partnership Instrument was designed in 2016²⁵ through a participative approach involving in particular Commission policy-making services active in implementing the PI and using its actions. It is set at instrument level to reflect the pitch of the evaluation. The IL as presented hereafter was designed based on the PI and the CIR regulations and the 2014-2017 MIP.

The overall objectives of the PI Regulation are reformulated into impact and outcome statements. The outputs and activities have been grouped in typologies and were identified through the analysis of concrete actions in Annual Action Programmes (AAPs) 2014, 2015 and 2016 (first phase). The IL includes three types of inputs (political, technical and financial and human) necessary for the implementation of the PI. It is completed by the pre-conditions which need to be met prior to implementation as well as assumptions at various levels required to realise the logical chain of results. The intervention logic is set out in figure 1 on page 7.

In this exercise it was important to **set the ambition at the right level** and to **capture the policy-supporting function of the PI**. The overall objectives of actions were sometimes established as too ambitious²⁶ (e.g. to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to contribute to climate change mitigation, greater sustainability through energy efficiency), while the PI with its limited funds can hardly be expected to contribute e.g. to a decrease in CO₂ emissions or to an overall increase in trade with country X. The IL therefore helps to frame the thinking when designing PI actions by putting emphasis on the real effects which the PI is designed to produce, i.e. to **influence policy-making processes** in partner countries on certain issues which can lead to longer-term effects, such as the adoption of ambitious targets for CO₂ reduction by country X or the development of a technological standard by country Y in order to create a level-playing field for European businesses (see a practical example below in Table 3). These are examples of political/policy changes that PI actions aim to bring about which then may in turn help to contribute to some other longer-term objectives (CO₂ emissions reduction, increase in trade). To realise the later, however, other additional steps need to be taken which go beyond the scope of a possible PI impact.

The political and policy changes PI aims to contribute to are in line with the ambition of the EU to act as a soft or normative power. Through cooperation and sharing of examples, rules, standards and values, the PI through its actions can indirectly influence the agenda and policy in its bilateral relationships and on the global scene contributing to an impact defined as "EU and mutual interests have been advanced and promoted" and through this to the Commission general objective no. 9 "The EU as a stronger global actor"²⁷.

²⁵ Study to develop indicators, monitoring system and to assess the first phase of implementation of the Partnership Instrument (November 2016).

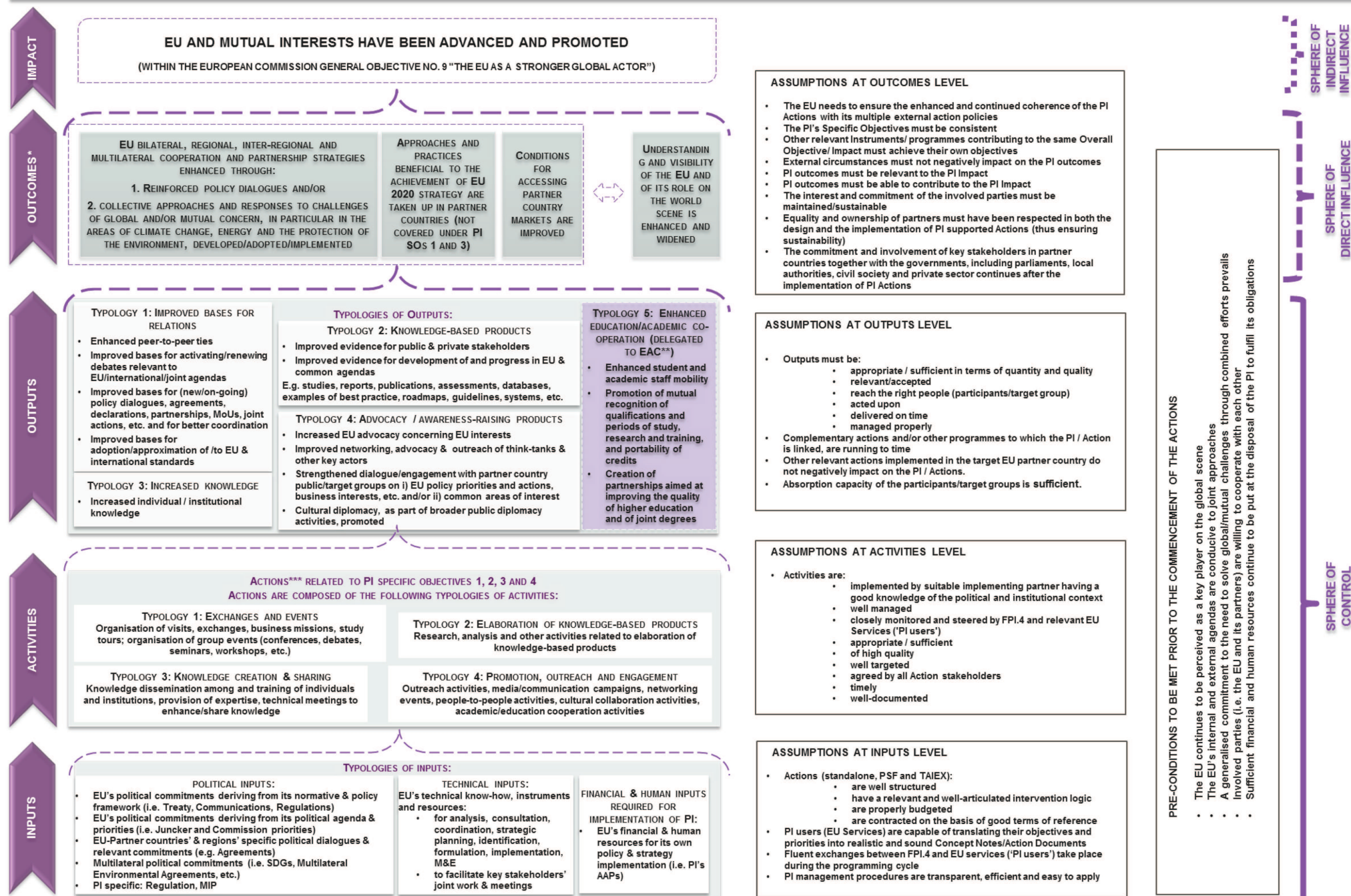
²⁶ Ibid, p. 37.

²⁷ See 10 priorities of the European Commission for 2015-2019, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities_en.

Table 3: Example of specific objective/outcome and overall objective/impact

Specific objective <i>To initiate a process leading towards adoption of ICT standard on machine-to-machine (M2M) compatible with EU/international standards in [country]</i>	Overall objective: <i>To contribute to higher interoperability of ICT standards in [country] with EU standards</i>
Potential outcome: <i>[country] set up a task force to develop standard on M2M and elaborated a roadmap with deadline to adopt the standard by 2019</i>	Potential impact: <i>[country] adopted a standard on M2M compatible with EU standards in 2020 and engaged in further standardisation cooperation</i>

FIGURE 1: OVERALL INTERVENTION LOGIC OF THE PARTNERSHIP INSTRUMENT FOR COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES



* The term 'outcome' equals the term 'result' as in the new instructions from the Secretary General linked to the Better Regulation Guidelines and the development of Strategic Plans of DGs. Due to the fact that the PI is an external action instrument with a strong influence of OECD/DAC terminology, the term outcome will be used.

** PI funds for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme are transferred to DG EAC. The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these funds is subject to the provisions of the Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+' and is beyond the scope of the management of the PI.

*** PI actions are either standalone or PSF/TAIEX. Standalone actions are of a longer-term and structural nature. PSF and TAIEX actions are more ad-hoc, reacting to short-term needs or building ground for future standalone actions, in support of the PI strategy.

2.4 Baseline

As this is a mid-term evaluation, the baseline has been set at January 2014, when the PI 2014-2020 was adopted and implementation began. Therefore the evaluation compares, to the extent possible, the situation on 1 January 2014 (Common Implementation Regulation, Article 17.3) with the current situation. As the PI was conceived as an entirely new instrument, there is by definition no comparable baseline to refer to. The PI common indicators included in Annex 3 recognise this starting point of the instrument by setting the baseline for indicators at 0 (zero).

3. METHOD

This evaluation follows the approach set out in the PI evaluation roadmap²⁸. It is supported by an external evaluation carried out by independent experts from June 2016 to June 2017 and managed by a reference group with Commission services and EEAS representatives through the following steps: an inception report (which explained how the evaluation design would deliver the information required); a desk report and meeting (providing initial responses to evaluation questions); validation phase including field visits to Argentina, Brazil, Brussels, China, India, Mexico, and the United States; a development of two databases covering all PI-supported actions with results and achieved values of common PI indicators²⁹; a survey to EU delegations covering all instruments; an "emerging messages" meeting;; working sessions with the evaluation teams of other EFIs; and a final report. In addition to the external evaluation, an Open Public Consultation³⁰ was organised on the draft report. It comprised a specific 12-week online survey and targeted meetings with institutional (Member States, European Parliament) and external stakeholders (academia/think-tanks/research, civil society/culture, international organisations, and business) in March 2017.

Challenges and mitigating measures

The process of this evaluation is considered to be robust since it builds on an external independent evaluation and since it was followed by a reference group comprised of various Commission and EEAS services (i.e. going beyond the Commission service which manages the instrument). The evidence gathered is considered to be solid since it builds on various sources: desk review; monitoring data; evaluation of a sample of actions; extensive stakeholder interview programme involving internal and field visits with interviews of external (partner country) stakeholders; open public consultation with institutional and external stakeholders. Two challenges were identified at the outset and mitigating measures were built into the terms of reference to overcome them:

1) The PI was a new instrument with first actions starting implementation only at the end of 2014, hence monitoring data was available only for a short period up until September 2016³¹. During this period, most actions remained in progress and only a few were fully completed. Moreover, there was no evaluation evidence based on similar past interventions³² because there was no "predecessor instrument" upon which to gauge or trace an outline of an evidence

²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017_fpi_003_evaluation_pi_en.pdf

²⁹ For the analysis of the databases see external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 8.

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/public-consultation-external-financing-instruments-european-union_en

³¹ September 2016 was selected as a cut-off date for monitoring data which needed to be collected, compiled and assessed by the external evaluator in order to deliver the draft final report in December 2016.

³² The PI builds on the ICI instrument, but is broader in thematic and geographical scope. No strategic evaluation is available for the ICI instrument. On project level, three flagship projects under ICI were evaluated of which two have been discontinued under the PI and only one has been continued due to positive results demonstrated by the evaluation (EU gateways / business avenues), see <https://www.eu-gateway.eu/file/284/download?token=uuytRTJI>.

base. As a mitigating measure, the external evaluation design included two additional exercises to gather evidence:

- Data collection on results achieved so far by all individual actions already completed or under implementation by September 2016
- Specific mid-term and final evaluations of 13 PI actions (covering all 4 objectives and different geographical areas) to gain an in-depth understanding of the operations in the field (Argentina, Brazil, Brussels, China, India, Mexico, and the United States)

2) The second challenge was linked to the first mitigating measure (data collection on results achieved so far). Data had to be retrieved from progress reports drafted by implementing partners as well as internal progress reports drafted by project managers.³³ This led to the following mitigating measure:

- The documentary review was complemented by primary data collection through systematic consultation of PI project managers³⁴. Nevertheless, data was not always available for the common PI indicators which were defined ex post (in 2016) and therefore the reported values are likely **underestimates of real performance**³⁵.

The indicator values are those reported by implementing partners (and complemented by interviews with project managers) which is a regular practice. This data, analysed in Annex 8 of the external evaluation report, was complemented by an extensive stakeholder consultation with 94 interviewees from EEAS, Commission services, EU delegations, European Parliament and Member States' representatives in the PI Committee. In addition, views were gathered from partner country institutions which were stakeholders in the 13 actions selected for mid-term and final actions evaluations. Views of institutional (Member States and European Parliament) and outside stakeholders (representing 23 organisations, of which 6 implementing partners) were also collected through a targeted face-to-face consultation meeting. Surveys of EU delegations and the Open Public Consultation with 130³⁶ replies complemented the range of views gathered.

This approach ensured that evidence at different levels could be gathered, analysed and usefully exploited and triangulated³⁷ to answer the evaluation questions at the mid-term of the implementation of the PI. The findings and conclusions of the evaluator are sufficiently robust and backed-up by evidence and Service for Foreign Policy Instruments managing the PI agrees with them. As a result, section 4 (implementation state of play) and 5 (replies to evaluation questions) build on the findings of external evaluation and refer also to stakeholder views gathered during the open public consultation.

As regards section 4, to complement the external evaluation report, other sources are exploited and documented: new data based on the first phase of AAP 2017 adopted in May 2017; internal PI monitoring system to update statistics on number of PI actions; data on financial execution; FPI Annual Management Plan and Annual Activity Report for 2016; and the study on indicators and monitoring from 2016.

³³ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 2-3.

³⁴ For 13 actions selected for individual action evaluation, this data collection was enriched by consultation of external stakeholders.

³⁵ This is explained in the external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 11.

³⁶ Altogether 124 replies were received online and 6 additional submitted by e-mail by Member States.

³⁷ Triangulation is a technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources.

4. IMPLEMENTATION STATE OF PLAY

This section provides, first, an overview of programming progress, structures and arrangements put in place for implementation, modalities and geographical and thematic coverage of PI actions to date. In the second part, it analyses financial execution and in the third part, presents the monitoring arrangements put in place as well as performance to date.

4.1 Implementation progress: multiannual and annual programming, structures put in place, modalities, geographical and thematic coverage

The MIP sets out priorities in terms of geographical and thematic focus, programming principles and indicative financial allocations (see above in section 2).

As regards the **annual programming procedure**, a significant development was noted by the external evaluator who found the **processes increasingly aligned with the strategic priorities**.³⁸ The PI is implemented through **Annual Action Programmes (AAPs)**. For AAP 2014 and 2015, Commission services, the EEAS and EU delegations were asked to submit proposals for action. As assessed by the external evaluator, this approach led, in some cases, to a lack of strategic priority setting, insufficient targeting and fragmentation of support.³⁹ These limitations were recognised early on by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and a new **cluster approach**⁴⁰ was put in place from the AAP 2016⁴¹ onwards to define better the thematic and regional strategic priorities around which projects are subsequently identified and formulated and to ensure input from relevant policy-making departments on priority-setting.

Partnership actions are formulated and implemented in cooperation with policy-relevant staff in Commission services, the EEAS and the EU delegations (the PI's "client" services). The client services provide content, technical input and policy steer which is combined with overall coordination and project management input by the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, a Commission service managing the PI. The external evaluator found that this innovative decision-making has **strengthened the coordination reflex of the client services** (beyond the PI) and that this coordination **puts into effect the coherence required with other EFIs**.⁴²

³⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 22.

³⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 25.

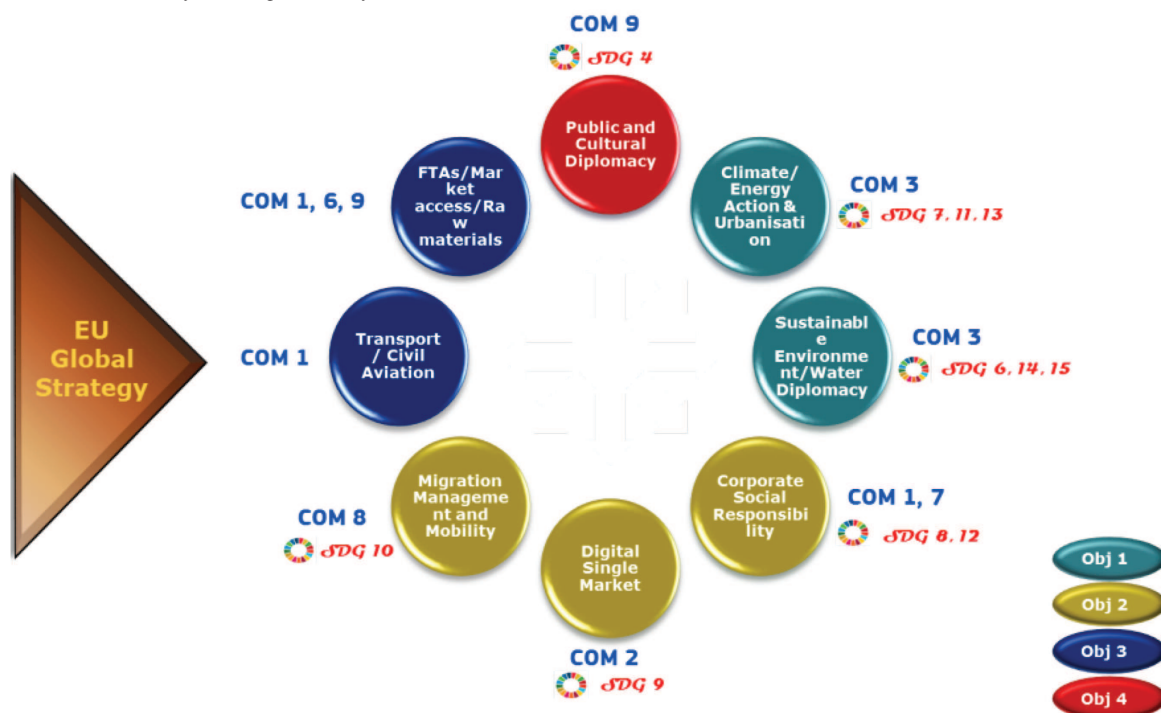
⁴⁰ This approach brings together relevant EEAS and Commission services around geographical and thematic "clusters". For further details see external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 13.

⁴¹ Nota bene that preparation of AAP 2016 started in April 2015, therefore the cluster approach started being implemented about one year after the adoption of the PI Regulation.

⁴² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 22 and 45.

Figure 2: PI main strands of action as of June 2017 per PI objective

COM 1, 2, 3, etc. refer to the priorities of the Juncker Commission



On the basis of the cluster approach, **nine main strands of PI action** were developed (see figure 2) which take into account the overall strategic framework of the EU's external action as represented by the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)⁴³, the Commission's 10 priorities as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴⁴. Thereby the PI respects the programming principle set out in the MIP (p. 11) of avoiding excessive fragmentation of activities in order to maximise impact. The external evaluator assesses that many actions pursue more than one specific PI objective.⁴⁵ Synergies are often created with specific objective 3 (market access). For example, by acting on climate change, opportunities to create a level playing field for EU businesses with green technologies are also explored and where possible integrated in the same action.

By June 2017, four AAPs for the PI were adopted totalling 77 actions (see table 4 below). Reflecting the requirement by the PI Regulation (Article 1) and the MIP (p. 11) to ensure an appropriate level of **flexibility to allow for an effective response to changing environments**, AAPs have been prepared since 2015 in two phases every year (once in the second and again in the third/fourth quarter). The external evaluation shows evidence⁴⁶ that this implementation method provides for more flexible responses than other EFIs which typically have one programming cycle per year.

Table 4: Overview of AAPs, number of actions fiches, total decided amounts

AAP year	Number of actions fiches	Decided amount (EUR million)
AAP 2014	19	107
AAP 2015 (both phases)	17	103.72
AAP 2016 (both phases)	22	109.15
AAP 2017 (first phase)	19	87.6

⁴³ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, June 2016.

⁴⁴ 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, September 2015.

⁴⁵ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 44.

⁴⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 7 and 29.

Total	77	407.47
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Partnership actions have been so far mainly **directly managed** either through service contracts or grants by FPI in Headquarters or in EU delegations⁴⁷. Each action "fiche" provides in general for one action which may be implemented through one or several projects (contracts/grants or delegation agreements). The action "fiche" for public diplomacy provides for more actions organised along four main types of interventions and different countries/regions.

Actions reflected in a "fiche" are generally of a longer-term and structural nature, referred to as **standalone actions**⁴⁸. Given the applicable internal Commission and comitology procedures, it takes generally from 1.5 to 2 years from the initial project idea, through identification and formulation of an action "fiche", adoption of AAP and procurement to the start of implementation.

Given the limitations of potentially lengthy procedures for implementing actions and to procure services on the market, the PI opted for a number of **rapid-response tools** that can be mobilised on short notice to respond with the necessary **flexibility** and **rapidity** to **emerging political priorities**⁴⁹, the "Policy Support Facility" (PSF) and "Technical Assistance and Information Exchange" (TAIEX). As well as *ad hoc* intervention by these rapid tools, they can also serve as bridging facilities to grasp or maintain the political momentum (for example in relation to a summit meeting or a negotiation) and to prepare grounds for a longer-term structural action. The "client" services identify emerging priorities or policy needs and submit proposals which are assessed applying fast procedures with consultation of all relevant departments. This ensures that there is no duplication with other interventions and that no other EFI could act as an alternative source of funding. PSF proposals are then formally approved by the PSF Panel composed of representatives of EEAS and Commission's Directorate General for Trade (for trade-related actions). The time taken from proposal to approval/decision is very short, on average less than two weeks for TAIEX and less than three weeks for PSF. After approval, the action is rapidly contracted due to the use of framework contracts (FWCs). The external evaluator underlines the usefulness of having put in place a specific and thematically broad framework contract for the PSF, since it enables a very fast reaction.⁵⁰ The same applies for TAIEX, which is an existing mechanism used in other EFIs and implemented through an existing service contract. Under the PSF **98 actions** and under TAIEX **59 actions** have been financed so far.

The evaluator finds that the PI has achieved its intended **global reach**. In the sample evaluated, half of the PI spend (EUR 130 million) represented actions implemented in the **strategic partner countries**⁵¹ and nearly the same amount (more than EUR 120 million) represented **multi-country/regional/global** actions where other partner countries⁵² are covered along with strategic partners. In addition, especially under PSF and TAIEX, actions

⁴⁷ PI has deployed in 2014 operational and financial managers in 9 strategic partner countries (Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and the United States), in 2016 in Indonesia. In 2017, two regional teams have been created to cover Americas and Asia-Pacific regions and reach out beyond strategic partner countries, one situated in Brazil (extension of existing bilateral team) and one newly based in Bangkok.

⁴⁸ "Standalone action" is an internal FPI term not used in the PI Regulation.

⁴⁹ Technically also action fiches included in the AAPs, but non-programmed.

⁵⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 29 and 30.

⁵¹ 9 countries as listed above in footnote no. 47.

⁵² Afghanistan, Arctic states, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brunei, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Grenada, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, UAE, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam.

were also implemented in **other partner countries**⁵³. The amount of these actions was lower (EUR 5 million) due to their shorter duration and smaller size.⁵⁴

Updated statistics as (as of June 2017) for the total of 246 PI actions (standalone, PSF and TAIEX) are presented in figures below. In total, the number of actions in strategic partner countries equals the number of actions in other partner countries and multi-country/regional/global actions combined. The pattern is more or less similar for standalone actions. However, the number of standalone actions implemented solely in ‘non-strategic’ partner countries is relatively low (only 3) in comparison with strategic partner countries (where FPI and other staff of Commission services are concentrated) suggesting the value of a specialist PI staff presence in EU delegations. TAIEX, on the other hand, shows the highest number of actions implemented in ‘other’ partner countries.

Figure 3: No. of all PI actions (N=246)

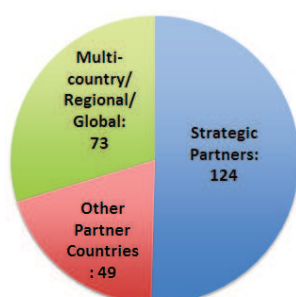


Figure 4: No. of standalone actions (N=87)

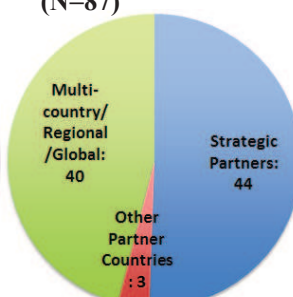


Figure 5: No. of PSF actions (N=98)

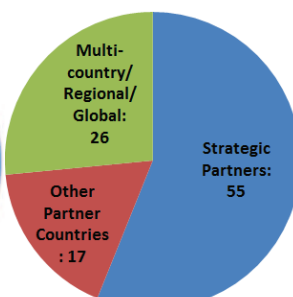


Figure 6: No. of TAIEX actions (N=59)



4.2 Financial implementation

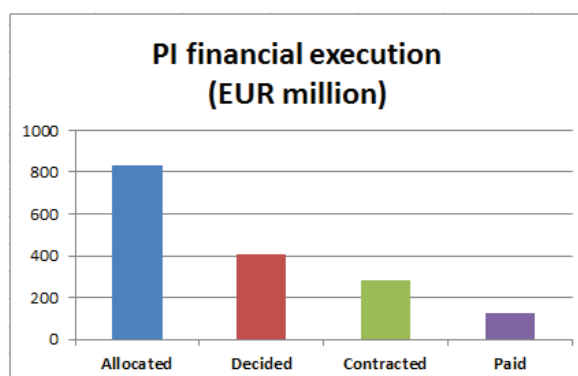
As regards financial implementation (see table 5 and figure 7), the PI is well on track in terms of amounts decided and contracted. The PI was successful in both AAP 2014 and 2015 in contracting all actions by the year following the adoption of the AAP (N+1 deadline). The Service for Foreign Policy Instrument responsible for the management of the PI monitors this internally by an indicator⁵⁵ included in its Annual Management Plan⁵⁶ and reported in its Annual Activity Report from 2016.⁵⁷

Table 5: PI financial implementation

Category	EUR million	% of allocated
Allocated	834.2	100%
Decided	407.47	48.8%
Contracted	285.4	34.2%
Paid	123.7	15.3%

Source: DEVCO Data Warehouse, extracted 01/06/2017
Based on operational appropriations, excluding contribution to Erasmus+

Figure 7: PI financial implementation



⁵³ Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Taiwan

⁵⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁵ Number of action fiches within AAP timely contracted by N+1.

⁵⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/management-plan-2016-dg-fpi-march2016_en.pdf, pp. 11-13.

⁵⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/aar-fpi-2016_annex_en_0.pdf, Annex 12: Performance tables, pp. 147-154.

Below, an analysis is made of allocated resources (total of EUR 407.47 million) per region as well as per PI specific objectives (see figures 8 and 9). Overall, PI implementation is on track, with the Asia-Pacific region consuming funds more rapidly than the Americas. The envelope for Russia, Central Asia and the Arctic is under-consumed due to the current political relationship with Russia which limits cooperation solely to civil society and people-to-people contacts. Thematically, Objective 4.2 Public Diplomacy has been front-loaded to respond to high demand. Objective 3.1 Market Access shows high consumption in Asia-Pacific mainly due to the Gateway programmes implemented in South-East Asia, Japan, Korea and the pilot in China. The financial analysis together with stakeholder feedback indicate that the deployment of funds per specific objective and per region is in line with initial targets and continues to be instrumental to the achievement of EU interests abroad.⁵⁸ In fact, the allocations being indicative, full alignment was never an objective. The deployment of resources is dependent on the priorities set annually for different regions and on the capacity of the EEAS and Commission services to identify relevant actions.

Figure 8: Decided amounts per region (EUR million)

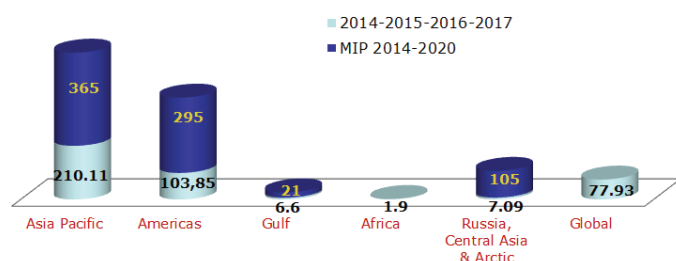
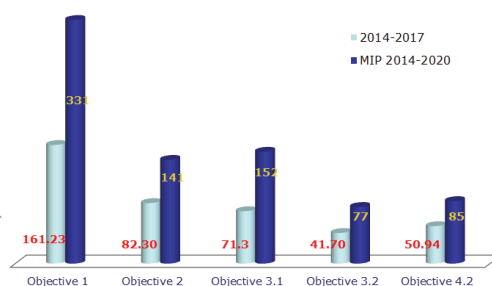


Figure 9: Decided amounts per objective (EUR million)



Over time, it has become apparent that the PI meets a clear demand by relevant policy-making departments in the Commission and the EEAS. This is helped by the fact that overall annual allocations (all regions and objectives combined) are limited in size, which reinforce the focus on the nine main strands of action (see figure 2 above) to achieve the desired impacts.

4.3 Monitoring arrangements and performance to date

From the outset of PI implementation, logical frameworks were developed for most of standalone actions and the indicators contained therein were to be monitored by implementing partners through progress reports. An additional system of internal progress reports drafted every six months by PI project managers was established. However, there was initially no overall monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework at instrument level with clearly defined common indicators, as confirmed by the evaluator.⁵⁹

The Commission service managing the PI decided to further consolidate the M&E system and developed in 2016 an overall intervention logic, a set of **common PI indicators**, related guidelines and reporting templates.⁶⁰ The system places responsibility on implementing partners for data collection and reporting. PI project managers perform quality review. In addition, FPI updated the system of internal progress reports in December 2016 to focus more on performance and to include final reports on PSF and TAIEX actions.

⁵⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 32 and 48.

⁶⁰ Study to develop indicators, monitoring system and to assess the first phase of implementation of the Partnership Instrument (Particip in consortium with Ecorys, November 2016).

The external evaluator performed a first data collection against the common PI indicators for all actions for which progress reports were available up until September 2016. This exercise required a retrospective assignment of observed results against the newly-defined set of indicators through a manual process of document review complemented by consultations with PI project managers⁶¹. None of the actions examined were required to report against the common indicators, so it was not possible to capture the full performance. The external evaluator states that the figures (see Annex 3) are likely to underestimate the true numbers of results achieved by September 2016.⁶²

The external evaluator concludes that the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, managing the PI, took important steps to strengthen the M&E framework of the instrument. The external evaluator makes some recommendations with a view to consolidating the system in terms of quality control of reported data or on follow-up on the use of the reporting template by the implementing partners.⁶³ As a result, a project was put in place in May 2017 to train⁶⁴ PI project managers, colleagues from client services and implementing partners in the development of quality logframes, the use and development of indicators; to provide a helpdesk function for ad-hoc queries; to quality review reported information; as well as to continue with retrospective data collection for ongoing actions (for which common indicators can no longer be introduced in their monitoring framework) in order to gather as complete evidence as possible on the performance of the PI. The project runs until the end of 2019 with a view to reinforcing the M&E framework of the PI.

5. ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

5.1 Relevance

To what extent do the overall objective (PI Regulation, Article 1(1)), the four specific objectives (PI Regulation, Article 1(2)), the thematic priorities (PI Regulation, Annex) and the design of the PI respond to:

- *(i) EU priorities identified at the time the instrument was adopted (2014)? and*
- *(ii) Current EU priorities, in particular as regards its strategic relationship with countries covered by the PI, given the evolving challenges and priorities in the international context?*

Overall answer: The objectives and implementation of the PI responded to EU priorities at the time of adoption and still respond to EU priorities today, having successfully adapted to new and changing needs and priorities of both the EU and partner countries.

The PI was created in **direct response to a changing international context**, with the emergence of new actors and the evolution of the EU's relations with third countries and the growing need for new partnerships with countries of strategic interest. It was designed to enhance political and policy cooperation of the EU bilaterally, regionally and globally with a broader spectrum of countries, across a broader range of policy areas and with the principle of partnership between equals. As such, it constitutes an “innovative” instrument because it was

⁶¹ In case of the sample of actions for final evaluations, these have been complemented by interview with stakeholders of the action.

⁶² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 11-13.

⁶³ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 48 and 50.

⁶⁴ First training took place on 20 June 2017 and will continue with targeted training sessions during autumn in Brussels and all EU delegations with PI staff.

intended to expand cooperation beyond development cooperation, pursue foreign policy and “create a positive environment for a deepened relationship” with partners⁶⁵.

The external evaluation demonstrates that the **PI was and remains directly relevant to long standing EU priorities and but also to the new and changed policy priorities** that have arisen since the instrument was adopted, based on desk review and interviews.⁶⁶ The **broad wording of the PI objectives is considered a positive, enabling factor**.⁶⁷ **Flexibility** is not only due to the design of the PI Regulation; it is also the result of the **way the PI is implemented**. The Common Implementing Regulation (CIR) and the Financial Regulation create broadly the same rules for EFIs decision-making and implementation, but choices made in the method of implementation and programming of the PI ensure that it **responded to changing EU priorities**.⁶⁸

– This is particularly due to the PSF and TAIEX tools; and the roll-out of the annual programme in two phases (allowing for flexible adaptation). It is also due to the fact that PI is not geographically pre-allocated by country, and neither financing agreements nor co-financing are required from partner countries.⁶⁹ The PI responded flexibly to new needs and the changing context of partner countries, new international commitments such as the Paris Agreement⁷⁰ and new priorities established in the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy⁷¹. The external evaluator concluded that the **responsiveness of the Partnership Instrument** is in part due to its **inclusive nature**, with an **active involvement of stakeholders across EU service lines** whereby project identification and programming is driven by Commission services and EEAS policy departments and EU delegations.⁷² This allows checks to ensure that no other financing instruments are available for the proposed actions. In practice, in the case of EU industrialised partner countries, strategic partners and graduated countries, the PI is the only instrument to support bilateral cooperation.⁷³ For other partner countries, the PI is used where an EU strategic interest exists and where the actions considered cannot be funded by other instruments, as confirmed by stakeholders’ views. On the downside, it is noted that all EU delegations are not yet well informed of the possible use of the PI in their countries, which may have resulted in smaller uptake of potential PI support in some areas (e.g. central Asia).⁷⁴

5.2 Effectiveness, impact, and sustainability

To what extent does the PI deliver results against the instrument's objectives, and specific EU priorities?

What lessons can be learned from the programming and implementation of PI assistance to improve the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of financial assistance?

Overall answer: The PI is effective in delivering results, as supported by evidence. This is a positive achievement given the early stage of implementation. The outcomes observed so far

⁶⁵ Recital 4, PI Regulation

⁶⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 7.

⁶⁷ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 6.

⁶⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 7.

⁶⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Paris Climate Agreement reached on 12 December 2015 in Paris at the 21st Conference of the Parties within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

⁷¹ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy, June 2016

⁷² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 8.

⁷³ Cooperation with graduated countries is possible under DCI thematic programmes, however bilateral cooperation is no longer available.

⁷⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 8.

and the expected results indicate that the PI actions designed so far will contribute to the achievement of all PI specific objectives. With 28.6% of funding allocated to climate change action, the PI is exceeding the overall EU target (20%). However, the overarching themes indicated for mainstreaming in the CIR Regulation are not systematically addressed in the design and implementation of PI actions.

The decision-making process - which has evolved to become more strategic - facilitated active involvement and ownership of PI actions on the part of client policy departments and so contributed to more effective actions. Some lessons identified include: EU delegations could potentially play a more active role in the formulation of actions; there is a need for client departments to provide more support to the implementation of the actions; visibility of the PI especially internally needs to be further improved. As regards sustainability, many larger actions have been designed with a view to achieving sustainable impacts, but it is too early in the implementation process to draw conclusions. Smaller actions on the other hand are not necessarily expected to lead to sustainable effects.

Effectiveness of the PI has been measured against evidence collected for PI common indicators (see Annex 3). As explained in the section above on methodology, it was not possible to compare achieved results with those of a similar predecessor instrument, i.e. there was no benchmark or baseline. Nevertheless, there is solid evidence⁷⁵ of the PI having influenced policy / political processes in partner countries and/or the development of mutual relationships with these countries, with 53 outcomes recorded to date. For example, the PI provided many of the concrete deliverables contributing to a successful conclusion of the recent EU-India summits in 2016 and 2017. The number of outcomes delivered so far constitutes a positive achievement, especially since few actions have been completed⁷⁶. It should be noted that this figure is likely an underestimate of true results (see section 4.3).

Real impacts take time to materialise. Nevertheless, the recorded outcomes (see previous paragraph) suggest that the **PI support deployed is working towards the expected impacts**⁷⁷, as recognised notably by external stakeholders⁷⁸. Document analysis and stakeholder feedback confirm that **PI actions to date are delivering outcomes that address all four of the PI's specific objectives**. In addition, the analysis of PI-funded actions themselves also shows that there are a substantial number of actions (around one in every four) that contribute to more than one of the four specific PI objectives. The observed outcomes indicate that **the design of PI actions contributes to the achievement of each specific objective**. An example of an actual impact already achieved is a change in the partner's country legislation (the removal of a trade barrier on non-pasteurised cheese) in the aftermath of the TAIEX *Expert Mission on EU Regulations and safety on non-pasteurized cheese* in South Korea.⁷⁹

A number of internal and external factors were identified as drivers of effective implementation of the PI:

- **Timeliness of intervention** – both in terms of speed of action necessary to react to evolving context (especially thanks to the PSF and TAIEX arrangements)⁸⁰; as well as in situations where support from other EFIs is being phased out and the PI can be used to avoid vacuum (cf. countries recently graduated from development cooperation).

⁷⁵ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Annexes, Annex 8.

⁷⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 13.

⁷⁷ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Annexes, Annex 8, p. 85.

⁷⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 11, p. 110.

⁷⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 14-15.

⁸⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 17.

- **Identification and pursuit of mutual interest with partner countries** is a critical factor increasing effectiveness of PI actions, as stressed unanimously during the external stakeholder consultation⁸¹. Identification of areas of mutual interest is essential in developing a new approach to bilateral and multilateral partnerships and provides an opportunity for the EU to promote its policies, principles and values in areas of shared interest. This sends a strong political signal in terms of the recognition of the partner's agenda, in turn creating a favourable environment for enhancing political and policy dialogue⁸².
- The Partnership Instrument needs a **stable environment / political situation in the partner countries**. It is not a crisis instrument and does not have the vocation to address the deterioration of the political situation in a third country⁸³. Nevertheless, the PI can serve as an 'opener' or 'enabler'⁸⁴ as it can be deployed quickly when a **window of opportunity** appears to open or help develop new areas of cooperation with specific countries⁸⁵.

As regards **climate change spending**, the **Partnership Instrument currently exceeds EU's target**, with 28.6% of funding allocated to activities related to climate change. Additionally, a further 4.3% has been allocated to biological diversity⁸⁶.

As regards the cross-cutting themes highlighted for mainstreaming in the CIR, i.e. gender equality, disability access, support to the rule of law, democracy and human rights, climate change⁸⁷ and biodiversity, the external evaluator found that there is limited or missing structural attention to their mainstreaming within funded actions and further scope for improvement of the PI's contribution to these issues, for instance through systematic screening in the programming process⁸⁸. PI's performance in this regard was positively assessed by external stakeholders who called in particular for continued support for actions on climate change and the environment⁸⁹.

As regards programming, the external evaluator notes that some stakeholders find that priorities set for the PI are sometimes too general, which creates a risk of diluting the resources⁹⁰. As noted above in sections 4.1 and 4.2, the risk of spreading resources too thinly was addressed by defining nine main strands of action. The external evaluator also noted that there is an **ongoing tension between the flexible implementation of the PI and its political nature on the one hand, and the need for a longer-term vision** on the other hand⁹¹. In this sense, the external evaluator assessed as positive the **"cluster" approach** uniting policy departments concerned by a particular theme, country or region as this enhances coordination and improves definition of actions along strategic priorities, thus ensuring that support is targeted where most value can be added. However, some institutional and structural challenges in this process remain:⁹²

⁸¹ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 11, p. 111.

⁸² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 18.

⁸³ This is the principle role of another EFI, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

⁸⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 35.

⁸⁵ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 18.

⁸⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 19.

⁸⁷ Nota bene, mainstreaming of climate change and biodiversity, as well as other issues, is different from targeted action through which these topics may be specifically addressed.

⁸⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 19.

⁸⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 11, p. 110.

⁹⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 29.

⁹¹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 22.

⁹² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 22 and 23.

- Some Commission policy departments need at times additional resources and input to define their external priorities. Input from EU delegations into this exercise is expected to help in this regard.
- Despite the steer provided by the EEAS, there is scope for more involvement at higher level, including through regular discussion with EEAS management and closer involvement of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission's cabinet (towards which FPI has already made steps).
- Lack of wide knowledge and understanding of the PI and its objectives among some internal stakeholder groups (some Commission departments and some delegations).

Overall, the internal processes have led to the identification of effective actions⁹³. The cluster approach proved instrumental in facilitating ownership of the instrument by the relevant policy experts in headquarters and in delegations. Given that PI is a new instrument dealing with new challenges, the processes are still open to further adaptation.

Findings from the external mid-term and final evaluations of specific actions and from stakeholders' views indicate that **EU delegations could play a more active role in identifying and designing actions** for funding, given their knowledge of the local context in partner countries and the critical role they have played in implementing actions to date⁹⁴. This is increasingly recognised and delegations are now providing input into the annual programming process. The involvement of PI staff in regional teams is a step towards an increased empowerment of the relevant delegations. Nevertheless, final decisions on priorities should stay in headquarters to maintain strategic direction.

Involvement of Commission and EEAS policy departments presents challenges⁹⁵. From the EEAS, there is sometimes a perceived lack of political steer with initial inputs to design of actions coming rather from delegations or Commission departments⁹⁶, although the cluster approach was designed to facilitate the priority setting and strategic guidance on policy objectives. The involvement of the Commission services is necessary to provide the technical steer to design and implementation of actions. Where this is not secured, it may lower the quality of the deliverables⁹⁷. The external evaluator concludes that there is **scope for Commission services to provide more support to the design and implementation of actions**⁹⁸.

Communication on the Partnership Instrument and its results is also important, both internally within the Commission services and externally to stakeholders in partner countries. In the public consultation, the lack of visibility of the instrument was identified as a weakness⁹⁹. In the current implementation period, **increased visibility could help potential Partnership Instrument users to make the most of the instrument**, and clarify expectations in partner countries about what the instrument can and cannot do, especially in countries that are graduating from development assistance¹⁰⁰.

Findings from external evaluations of specific actions confirm that the degree to which the PI-funded actions are sustainable is very much dependent on the nature of each action. Not all

⁹³ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 10.

⁹⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 23.

⁹⁵ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 22.

⁹⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 23.

⁹⁷ As an example from one action suggests: see external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 18.

⁹⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 23.

⁹⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 11, p. 110.

¹⁰⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 24.

actions require sustainability – indeed some are focussed on specific events or issues which are designed to be one-off, and for which longer-term sustainability is neither required nor desired. External action evaluations found that larger actions were designed to achieve sustainable outcomes, but as the majority of these actions are still ongoing, it is too early to assess¹⁰¹.

5.3 Efficiency

To what extent is the PI delivering efficiently?

Overall answer: Programming and implementation arrangements set up for the PI reflect the need for the instrument to be more flexible than other EFIs. Achieving flexibility involves a proportionate cost and a reasonable administrative burden. This ensures that the PI is fit for purpose. A common monitoring and evaluation framework is being consolidated, which, once fully implemented, will strengthen the evidence base for future evaluations.

Quantitative evidence on efficiency was overall limited¹⁰²; the analysis draws mainly on qualitative data.

Ratios of administrative costs to overall budget for each EFI are presented in table 6 below. The external evaluator considered that the ratio of administrative costs to overall budget of the Partnership Instrument is **proportionate and reasonable** when compared with other EFIs because flexibility is part of its *raison d'être*, requiring higher resources, and because it is overall directly managed by the Commission (FPI), meaning that administrative costs are borne by the Commission since management is not "outsourced" (as would be the case in indirect management). In addition, the instrument supports a wide variety of actions, which require tailored management and administration, and are to a very large extent contracted separately. Institutional and external stakeholders confirmed that the PI's administrative costs are reasonable and in line with what the instrument is expected to achieve and what it has delivered against its objectives to date¹⁰³.

Table 6: Overview of the ratio of administrative costs to overall budget for all EFIs

External Financing Instrument	Administrative support	(% admin/total)	Operational appropriations	Executive Agency	Total 2020 (EUR million)
IPA II	326.3	2.7%	11,798.0	5.5	12,129.9
ENI	339.3	2.1%	15,979.4	17.0	16,335.8
DCI	608.5	3.0%	19,341.9	16.5	19,966.9
PI	34.1	3.6%	921.6	1.0	956.7
EIDHR	76.9	5.8%	1,244.4	0.0	1,321.2
IcSP	64.9	2.9%	2,182.8	0.0	2,247.7
INSC	9.9	3.1%	315.4	0.0	325.3
Total	1,530.4	2.3%	64,374.8	47.2	65,952.3

Source: Budget of the European Union

There is a **consensus among institutional stakeholders that the PI is implemented flexibly**. Flexibility is facilitated by the policy support mechanisms available (PSF, TAIEX), as well as unique features of its management: the absence of country allocations, country strategy papers or financing agreements; and the adoption of the AAP in two phases allowing for updated priorities during the year. The action-level external evaluations provide strong evidence of this flexibility in implementation.

¹⁰¹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 24.

¹⁰² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 27.

¹⁰³ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 28.

Some stakeholders consulted were concerned that **priorities, as currently framed, are too general, creating a risk that support would be spread too thinly across a large number of issues**. Steps were taken to address this risk by **strengthening the strategic direction of PI decision-making**, notably by the cluster approach for identifying actions¹⁰⁴ (see section 5.2).

Contracting is particularly fast under PSF, as evidenced by the external evaluator, as well as under TAIEX¹⁰⁵. It takes on average three months from submission of PSF concept note / TAIEX application through its approval to its contracting. Based on qualitative evidence, the consensus is that the administrative burden is proportionate to PI-supported actions¹⁰⁶.

The external evaluator noted that the CIR rules are interpreted flexibly. In fact, a number of rules set out by the CIR are not relevant for the PI, such as untying of aid¹⁰⁷.

Finally, a common monitoring and evaluation framework is being consolidated, which, once implemented, will strengthen the evidence base for future evaluations¹⁰⁸. The set of common indicators developed for the PI covers almost the whole range of PI interventions, with the exception of impact for public diplomacy activities which proved challenging in terms of monitoring. Efforts were however made to develop contextual indicators for public diplomacy at least for strategic partner countries, through an exhaustive perception study and work is ongoing on the drafting of public diplomacy indicators¹⁰⁹. Further details can be found in section 4.3.

5.4 Added Value

To what extent do the PI actions add value compared to interventions by Member States or other key actors?

- *Where the PI is operating in the same field as EU Member States and other key actors, does it add value in terms of size of engagement, particular expertise and/or particular weight in advocacy?*
- *What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the PI support?*

Overall answer: The PI presents a clear EU added value due to its design and its specialisation in the support for the promotion of strategic EU interests and objectives. There is a consensus that the EU level is the most appropriate for action in the areas/countries/international for a on which the PI focusses, notably for its distinctive approach to cooperation, the expertise it mobilises on a wide range of topics and the leverage it allows on other actors. Withdrawing PI support would leave the EU without the means to pursue partnerships with a wide range of partner countries, failing to live up to its commitments as well as to the partners' expectations and losing leverage for its policy objectives.

The EU added value of the Partnership Instrument is multifaceted and reflects stakeholders' different perspectives. From an internal perspective (the EU and Member States), the added value of the PI comes from the design and legal architecture of the instrument, its scope and its leverage. The external evaluation confirms that the PI successfully addresses EU priorities and fundamentally brings EU interests to the fore by supporting the implementation of and

¹⁰⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 30.

¹⁰⁷ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 32.

giving substance to partnerships and tackling global challenges and by promoting EU international agenda in a way that could not be achieved by other instruments or actors¹¹⁰.

There is a consensus through evidence gathered by the external evaluation and in particular by external stakeholders that the EU is the most appropriate level of intervention in the areas / countries / international fora concerned by the Partnership Instrument, ranging from areas where the EU has exclusive competence (e.g. external trade) to areas relating to promoting the concept of the EU, its ideals and values (i.e. public diplomacy)¹¹¹.

The instrument, by filling the gap in EU external actions for the pursuit of EU interests, is a unique means of covering those areas of external action with limited or no other sources of funding by other EFIs. The creation of the Partnership Instrument led to a change in approach, enabling the EU to pursue its strategic objectives and interests with partner countries across the globe. Overall, EU stakeholders agreed that without PI funding the EU would be a very challenging situation as it would be left without the means to support and sustain its strategic partnerships and interests, thereby weakening its credibility and international standing¹¹². Partners also perceive the EU's approach to cooperation / dialogue with its focus on consensus building as an added value of an intervention at EU level (as opposed to Member States level).

From an external perspective, the added value of the action enabled by the PI lies in the fact that action at EU level is considered the most appropriate. Partners identify three reasons to support this: the broad enabling scope of the instrument, the EU's approach with its focus on consensus-building and also on leverage¹¹³ (see section 5.6).

5.5 Coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies

To what extent does the PI facilitate coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies internally between its own set of objectives and actions, vis-à-vis other EFIs, other EU policies and instruments, and interventions by other actors (including EU Member States)?

Overall answer: The inclusive and participatory PI decision-making processes have ensured that the Partnership Instrument facilitates coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies both internally and externally.

Making the EU a stronger global actor is a Commission priority, and this requires bringing together more effectively the tools of EU external action. The PI is aligned with this priority¹¹⁴ since it covers the pursuit of EU interests, the external projection of its internal policies and implementation of the external dimension of Europe 2020. Cases where PI actions complement the achievement of other EU objectives have been identified notably with regard to development policy; climate change, environment and commodities trade, market access and investments; research; and public and cultural diplomacy.

As regards other EFIs, there are in principle no issues concerning complementarity with ENI and IPA II as the PI a priori does not intervene in countries under the scope of these instruments. As for EIDHR and IcSP, no evidence of overlap was found and some opportunities for synergies were noted (such as PI's action on the abolition of death penalty in South-East Asia or PI public diplomacy action in the USA spreading messages on the peacebuilding role that the EU plays, respectively). The most important relation is between

¹¹⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 34.

¹¹¹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 34.

¹¹² See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 34.

¹¹³ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 35.

¹¹⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 41.

the PI and the DCI. In particular in graduated countries¹¹⁵, the PI builds on cooperation supported by the DCI to establish a “deepened relationship”, e.g. from a project approach like the Clean Ganga initiative (under the DCI) to the water partnership with India (under the PI). The PI was set up as an innovative, foreign policy instrument to pursue cooperation beyond the development logic and towards a logic of “partnership of equals”¹¹⁶. However, bilateral assistance under the DCI does not stop with the cut-off date and ongoing projects coexist with PI support. No evidence of overlaps or open contradictions with the DCI were found, but there remains a need to monitor actions under both instruments. Arrangements for PI decision-making and for gathering stakeholders’ feedback show that consultation and information-sharing with DEVCO services managing the DCI is ensured at different levels: “cluster” meetings on different policy themes or countries, Quality Support Groups (to examine project proposals) and PSF selection panels¹¹⁷.

Opportunities were used for complementarities and synergies between the PI and internal EU instruments with an external dimension. The external evaluator identifies several occasions where synergies were found, e.g. with the COSME and Horizon 2020 programmes¹¹⁸.

Despite some overlaps between specific objective 2 (which is of a more overarching nature as it refers to the international dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy) and specific objectives 1 and 3, the internal coherence of the PI was found to have been achieved at the level of individual actions. In particular, synergies towards trade-related interests exist across the PI-supported actions which either explicitly fall under the specific objective 3 or mainstream a trade / market-access component¹¹⁹.

The processes put in place by the PI ensure an inclusive and coordinated approach¹²⁰ to programming and implementation reinforces such coherence in PI actions.

Finally, a good degree of complementarity exists with interventions by Member States with coordination taking place in third countries where PI actions are implemented between the EU delegations and Member States’ embassies. Overall, **Member States appreciate the PI for the added value its interventions bring to cooperation / dialogue with partners**. But they continue to weigh the opportunity costs of the promotion of EU as opposed to national strategic interests on an *ad hoc* basis¹²¹. As a case in point, Member States were divided as to the perceived complementarity or even potential competition between the Gateways/Business Avenues projects and their bilateral actions. Certain Member States raised the issue of tensions with the Gateways/Business Avenue actions in partner countries where they have already actions with similar objectives¹²². The external evaluator pointed to the efforts of Commission service managing the PI to raise awareness through presentations to Council geographical working groups and suggests more should be done on this front also vis-a-vis the PI Committee¹²³ and in the concerned partner countries through EU delegations. In this regard, during the stakeholder consultation, Member States were interested in receiving more data on PI supported actions, in particular in relation to the state of implementation of ongoing actions, as well as results from the monitoring and evaluation activities¹²⁴. Finally, PI actions are found to be coherent with interventions of other key actors at multilateral level¹²⁵.

¹¹⁵ See footnote 14 above.

¹¹⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 43.

¹¹⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 43 and 44.

¹¹⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 44.

¹²⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 45.

¹²¹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 46.

¹²² See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report - Annexes, p. 114.

¹²³ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 26 and 47.

¹²⁴ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 11, p. 113.

¹²⁵ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, pp. 46-47.

5.6 Leverage

To what extent has the PI leveraged further funds and/or political or policy engagement?

Since its creation, the PI has demonstrated political and policy leverage. It acted as an enabler, opening up areas for political and policy dialogue and cooperation. Financial leverage is not a condition for deployment of PI support given its primary aim of pursuing EU interest, but the conditions under which leverage should be sought remains a strategic question for the future.

The 2011 Impact Assessment anticipated that the Partnership Instrument would be critical for capitalising on the EU's relative weight when it comes to respond to global challenges, as well as in strengthening cooperation with different categories of partners. The PI was expected to be critical for political and policy engagement because it would link dialogues and partnerships with specific cooperation activities. External evaluation at instrument level and the in-depth individual action evaluations provided evidence of the good performance to date of the Partnership Instrument in this respect, and this was also recognised by Member States in the stakeholder consultation¹²⁶. The **political leverage that the Partnership Instrument is designed to aim for is its distinguishing feature within the set of EFIs**¹²⁷. The PI focuses on the promotion of EU strategic interests, a role which is not legally assigned to any other EFI. PI is designed to support dialogue between the EU and its partners, placed on an equal footing, thereby exiting fully from the traditional donor logic. There is a consensus among stakeholders that the **strengthening of policy and political dialogues** is the most obvious example of the unique political leverage of the Partnership Instrument¹²⁸.

In fact, there is a two-way process between policy dialogue and concrete realisations supported by the PI. The PI gives substance to dialogues/partnerships by supporting concrete initiatives; these concrete initiatives raise the EU's and its partners' interest in dialogues/partnerships. This triggers a self-sustaining momentum which is valued across the range of EU bilateral relations.

As for financial leverage, given the focus in the design of the instrument on the EU's interests this means that it does not rely on co-financing. Stakeholder views were split on whether this constitutes a missed opportunity (partner countries may be interested to contribute financially where they see strong interest) or a condition for the EU to formulate its actions independently. Grants under calls for proposals require match funding of 25%. One standalone action is leveraging money from the EU industry (EU-China Aviation Partnership). There is evidence of in-kind support provided by administrations of some partner countries¹²⁹.

Overall, financial leverage will be more of a strategic consideration in the medium- to long-term given the relatively small budget of the PI and the corresponding constraints in terms of the scope of (follow-up) actions and upscaling. Securing funding from other actors might help overcome this limitation, while enhancing the sustainability of the impact of EU actions under the PI through a commitment from its partners¹³⁰. However, when the EU interest is paramount it is not always desirable or appropriate to expect co-financing from the partner country. Co-financing could in certain circumstances undermine the argument that the action is in the "EU interest".

¹²⁶ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report – Annexes, Annex 11, p. 113.

¹²⁷ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 36.

¹²⁸ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 36.

¹²⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 37.

¹³⁰ See external evaluation report, Volume I: Final Report, p. 37.

6. CONCLUSIONS

1. At the mid-term of its implementation, the Partnership Instrument has proven its continued relevance to long standing EU priorities and demonstrated its flexibility through responses to new and changed policy priorities that have arisen since its adoption. This flexibility is not only due to the PI Regulation, but also through choices made in the way the instrument is implemented.
2. Available performance evidence proves the effectiveness of the PI in delivering results, which is a positive achievement given the early stages of implementation. The instrument is on track towards reaching its objectives and is ahead of the overall EU target as regards spending on climate action. However, more structural attention needs to be paid to the mainstreaming of overarching themes set out in CIR Regulation within funded actions.
3. PI serves to support EU interests and policies across a range of EU objectives, therefore its target "clients" are EU and Member States policy-makers. The decision-making process has evolved towards more concentration on strategic EU priorities. Some aspects need further improvement: increasing provision of resources and input by policy-making services to ensure they are fully involved in designing, programming and implementing the actions; enhancing the active role of EU delegations in the formulation of actions; increasing information sharing with Member States; and improving the visibility, knowledge and understanding of the objectives of the PI, especially within the EU institutions, so that its full potential is realised in the current implementation period.
4. The implementation of the PI is considered to be adaptive, efficient and flexible. Reaction to emerging needs is particularly fast through the PSF and TAIEX mechanisms as well as due to flexible programming through the adoption of AAP in two phases. Strategic direction of the PI was strengthened through the introduction of the "cluster" approach gathering all relevant EEAS and Commission policy departments on particular themes or countries. This was also instrumental in defining nine main priority interventions for the PI along with the EU Global Strategy, ten Commission priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals. This ensures PI actions are focused on achieving meaningful impacts. There are notable improvements in the monitoring and evaluation framework which have the potential to ensure robust performance data in the future as compared to the first stages of implementation of the PI.
5. The PI is the only instrument providing means to flexibly pursue EU strategic interests globally, demonstrating a clear EU added value. There is a consensus that the EU level is the most appropriate for action in PI fields of intervention. Withdrawing PI support would reduce the ability of the EU to pursue partnerships with a wide range of partner countries, failing to live up to its bilateral and international commitments as well as to the partners' expectations.
6. The PI is externally and internally coherent by design. In practice inclusive and participatory PI decision-making processes ensured that in its implementation, it facilitates coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies both internally and externally. The high level of involvement from "client" EEAS and Commission services is a condition sine qua non for the implementation of the PI, but to secure sufficient provision of resources and input from these services remains a challenge.
7. Financial leverage is not a requirement and has occurred to a limited extent. More important is the political and policy leverage potential inscribed in the design of the PI. This leverage potential has been realised as the PI has acted as an enabler, opening up new and wider areas for political and policy dialogue and cooperation.

ANNEX 1. PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Lead DG: Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)

The evaluation of the Partnership Instrument is one of a set of ten evaluations covering most External Financing Instruments¹³¹ under Heading 4 of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. In view of ensuring consistent EU external policies, all the evaluations have been carried out simultaneously and are interlinked.

Organisation and Timing

This evaluation was initiated in 2015. The evaluation roadmap was published in November 2015¹³². An Inter-Service Group (ISG) was constituted to specifically steer the work of the PI evaluation. It is composed of representatives of twelve European Commission services (including 3 central services) and the European External Action Service.

The evaluation is largely informed by an external evaluation conducted by independent consultants. The external evaluation started on 1st June 2016. The Final report was received on 23rd June 2017, on schedule. The evaluation process, lead by the ISG, was conducted in four phases, see Figure 2.

Process overview and Quality assessment

The external evaluation of the PI 2014-2020 was commissioned to provide the main information for this Staff Working Document. The evaluation was carried out fully in line with the indications provided in the above-mentioned roadmap. The evidence base in particular consisted of primary sources, secondary sources, and a consultation. A total of six countries were visited by the external evaluation team to conduct field visits for the sample of PI actions selected for the mid-term and final evaluation as well as to collect further information for the external evaluation of the Partnership Instrument. The sample of actions covered all 4 specific objectives of the PI and different regions and was agreed together with the ISG.

The external evaluation managed by the ISG involved a kick-off meeting, an inception report and meeting (which explained how the evaluation design would deliver the information required); a desk report and meeting (providing initial responses to evaluation questions); validation phase including field visits to Argentina, Brazil, Brussels, China, India, Mexico, and the United States of America to both perform mid-term and final individual action evaluations as well as to collect further information from EU delegation staff and partner country stakeholders on the PI; a development of two databases covering all PI-supported actions to date with results and achieved values of common PI indicators; a survey to EU delegations covering all instruments; an "emerging messages" meeting; a draft final report and meeting; an Open Public Consultation on the draft report which comprised a specific 12 weeks online survey and targeted meetings with institutional (Member States, European Parliament) and external stakeholders (academia/think-tanks/research, civil society/culture, international organisations, and business) in March 2017; working sessions with the external evaluation teams of other EFIs; and a final phase with a final meeting and the final report.

The ISG reviewed the external evaluation process at all stages. Due to the novelty of the Partnership Instrument, the external evaluator did additional efforts to collect monitoring data

¹³¹ Development Cooperation Instrument, 11th European Development Fund (EDF), European Neighbourhood Instrument, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, Greenland Decision, Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Instrument for Pre-Accession, Instrument on Nuclear Safety Cooperation, Overseas Countries and Territories Decision, Partnership Instrument and the Common Implementing Regulation. For the purpose of this exercise, the evaluation of the Overseas Countries and Territories Decision is included within the evaluation of the 11th EDF.

¹³² http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017_fpi_003_evaluation_pi_en.pdf

of all ongoing and finalised actions to establish a results database and to collect data on common PI indicators. The data are analysed in detail in the annexes to the external evaluation report. The consultation strategy deployed by the evaluator was extensive and included key internal players from the EU institutions as well as views from external stakeholders to triangulate the findings and to alleviate any possible bias. The reliability of the data used by the external evaluators is found to be high. The quantity of information analyses also appears satisfactory. The overall evidence used by the external evaluation was quality assured by the ISG.

Evaluation questions

Relevance

1. To what extent do the overall objective (PI Regulation, Article 1(1)), four specific objectives (PI Regulation, Article 1(2)), the thematic priorities (PI Regulation, Annex) and the design¹³³ of the PI respond to:

- (i) EU priorities identified at the time the instrument was adopted (2014)?
- (ii) Current EU priorities, in particular as regards its strategic relationship with countries covered by the PI, given the evolving challenges and priorities in the international context (2017)?

Information sought in this area includes:

- A timeline showing congruence/divergence of the instrument against evolving context, including global challenges, and institutional policy changes e.g. to what extent does the PI help to translate political commitments between the EU and partner countries into concrete measures.
- To what extent actions undertaken under the PI have responded to 'global challenges' in the area of climate change, energy and environment?

Effectiveness, impact, sustainability

2. To what extent does the PI deliver results against the instrument's objectives, and specific EU priorities?

Information sought in this area includes:

- To what extent does PI contribute to advancing and promoting EU's and mutual interests, and more specifically towards:
 - Supporting the Union's bilateral, regional and inter-regional cooperation partnership strategies by promoting policy dialogue and by developing collective approaches and responses to challenges of global concern;
 - Implementing the international dimension of "Europe 2020" strategy;
 - Improving access to partner country markets and boosting trade, investment and business opportunities for companies from the Union, while eliminating barriers to market access and investment, by means of economic partnerships, business and regulatory cooperation;

¹³³ i.e. how it all fits together

- Enhancing widespread understanding and visibility of the Union and of its role on the world scene by means of public diplomacy, people-to-people contacts, cooperation in educational and academic matters, think tank cooperation and outreach activities to promote the Union's values and interests.
- To what extent has the PI contributed to the European Union's priorities for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?
- To what extent does the PI mainstream EU policy priorities (e.g. gender, climate change) and other issues highlighted for mainstreaming in the instrument, and, where relevant, deliver on the commitments including the financial allocations?
- To what extent are the processes conducive to programming, identification/formulation of effective actions (PI Regulation, Articles 4-7)?
- To what extent is the PI flexible enough to respond to changing needs? (e.g. changed policy priorities, summit/high-level dialogue conclusions, written agreements such as MoUs, changed contexts)

Efficiency

3. To what extent is the PI delivering efficiently?

Information sought in this area includes:

- What is the ratio of administrative costs (as defined as “PI Support Expenditure” in the Draft General Budget of the EU¹³⁴) to overall budget?
- How efficient is budget execution in terms of time taken from commitments to payments?
- Are there areas, such as administrative/management procedures, where the PI can be simplified to eliminate unnecessary burden?
- To what extent is the PI in line with the implementing rules of the CIR ? Specifically in terms of :
 - Implementation
 - Subject matter and principles
 - Adoption of action programmes, individual measures and special measures
 - Support measures
 - Provisions on the Financing Methods
 - General financing provisions
 - Taxes duties and charges
 - Specific financing provisions
 - Protection of the financial interests of the Union
 - Rules on nationality and origin for public procurement, grant and other award procedures
 - Climate action and biodiversity expenditure

¹³⁴ See Title 19, item 19-01-04-04, pages 912-913 of the latest, 2016 draft budget <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/data/DB/2016/en/SEC03.pdf>

- Involvement of stakeholders of partner countries
 - Common rules
 - Eligibility under the PI
 - Monitoring and evaluation of actions
- To what extent are the following in place and functioning:
 - appropriate monitoring processes and indicators for measurement of the performance of the PI instrument
 - relevant strategic and operational indicators to measure results achieved by the PI?

Added value

4. To what extent do the PI actions add value compared to interventions by Member States or other key actors?

Information sought in this area includes:

- Where the PI is operating in the same field as EU Member States and other key actors, does it offer added value in terms of size of engagement, particular expertise, and/or particular weight in advocacy?

Coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies

5. To what extent does the PI facilitate coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies both internally between its own set of objectives and actions and vis-à-vis other EFIs?

Information sought in this area includes:

- To what extent are the different PI actions coherent/complementing/overlapping with one another?
- To what extent are the different PI actions aligned with EU interests?
- To what extent are the actions consistent with EU external action policies?
- To what extent do the actions complement/overlap/stimulate synergies with other external action financing instruments?¹³⁵
- To what extent does the PI complement/overlap with other EU instruments outside of development policy?
- To what extent does the PI complement/overlap with interventions of other key actors, in particular EU Member States?

Leverage

6. To what extent has the PI leveraged further funds and/or political or policy engagement?

7. How could the PI be enhanced to achieve its policy objectives more effectively and efficiently?

¹³⁵ Note the respective mandates of Directorate-General for International cooperation and Development and Service for Foreign Policy Instruments in EIDHR, PI and IcSP instruments

8. How can programming and implementation of PI assistance be enhanced to improve the impact and sustainability of financial assistance?

ANNEX 2. SYNOPSIS REPORT OF THE STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATION

The stakeholder consultation for the mid-term review of the PI began in late 2015 and came to an end in May 2017. The majority of the consultation activities took place during the Open Public Consultation at the beginning of 2017. As highlighted in the evaluation Roadmap¹³⁶, the consultation approach involved collecting input from a wide range of stakeholders on the PI 2014-2020 at its mid-point.

1. Evaluation Roadmaps

The consultation process began with the publication of the evaluation Roadmap, which was published on the European Commission website November 2015. As per the Better Regulation guidelines¹³⁷, the aim of the Roadmap was to give stakeholders and the general public an early opportunity to provide feedback on the evaluation and its approach. No feedback was received on the Roadmap.

2. Interviews

The external evaluation team conducted interviews with various stakeholders during all phases of the evaluation:

1. Interview programme including **94 interviews** with the European External Action Service, Commission services, EU delegations, European Parliament and Member States representatives in the PI Committee.
2. The **online survey to EU delegations** was open between October 2016 and February 2017.
3. The **Online Public Consultation** was online between February and May 2017 and was complemented by a series of additional face-to-face consultations on the external evaluation draft final report. The evaluators participated in a series of meetings with PI external and institutional stakeholders (including the Policy Forum on Development) that took place in Brussels in March 2017.
4. Lastly, the **interviews carried out during the fieldwork for the external individual action evaluations** of a sample of 13 PI actions further fed into the evidence base. They gathered data from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders (including staff at EU delegations, partner countries' representatives, implementing partners and stakeholders of PI-funded actions such as NGOs or business representatives).

The objectives of the interviews were to (i) address gaps in the documentation reviewed, (ii) understand realities on the ground, including through external mid-term and final evaluations of a sample of 13 PI actions, especially during the seven field visits (Argentina, Brazil, Brussels, China, India, Mexico, and the United States of America), and (iii) triangulate findings especially when the evidence collected was based on internal EU documentation and sources.

¹³⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017_fpi_003_evaluation_pi_en.pdf

¹³⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/toc_tool_en.htm

3. Open Public Consultation – 7 February to 3 May 2017

Introduction

In the context of the mid-term evaluation of the Partnership Instrument, the Open Public Consultation consisted of two pillars:

Firstly, an online public consultation (OPC) took place from 7 February to 3 May 2017. The OPC run in parallel for all the evaluations of the EFIs. The OPC gave the possibility to interested parties to express their views and opinions on the external evaluation draft final reports, made publically available on the OPC website. The purpose of the consultation was to gather:

- Feedback from the broadest possible range of stakeholders, including those in beneficiary countries and in the EU Member States, on the emerging conclusions from the external evaluations.
- Preliminary ideas on the future external financing instruments after the current ones have expired by 31 December 2020.

It also fulfilled the consultation requirement stipulated in the Better Regulation Guidelines.

All stakeholders in beneficiary and EU countries were welcome to participate in this consultation: public national and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, academics, development agencies and bodies, think tanks, consultancies, private sector organisations, development banks and citizens. The participants were invited to complete the online questionnaire provided and available in English. In addition, the participants were able to submit contributions in any official EU language.

The OPC was disseminated by the European Commission.

Secondly, to further support the online consultation exercise, a series of face-to-face consultations with stakeholders were organised in Brussels (for all EFI evaluations):

- 21 March 2017: external stakeholders (think tanks / academia / research, NGOs, international organisations, business) were invited to exchange their views on the PI, the evaluation and the future of the Instrument and the overall set of EU External Financing Instruments after 2020 with the evaluators and Commission services representatives.
- 23 March 2017: all the EFI external evaluation teams presented their draft conclusions at the Policy Forum on Development. The Forum provided an opportunity to engage with external stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds and exchange on the performance to date of EU cooperation, as well as its future orientation.
- 27-28 March 2017: this technical workshop included institutional stakeholders (representatives of the Member States and the European Parliament). Its objective was to collect their feedback on the external draft evaluation reports, the EFIs to date and their performance, as well as their views on the future of the EU's toolbox.

Our analysis of the feedback received through these different exercises is presented in this Annex. Firstly, we detail our findings and conclusions on the basis of the face-to-face consultations. These consultations took place under Chatham House rules. Views cannot be attributed to individuals and the report respects participants' anonymity. The paragraphs below summarise the findings and conclusions of the different consultations on the basis of the responses and views collected, as analysed by the external evaluation team. Secondly, we

analyse the responses submitted to the online public consultation. Respondents indicated if their entries could be directly published with their details or not, what determines when and how we were in a position to attribute the feedback received in this report.

Overall, the feedback was often not substantiated by concrete evidence. It has been taken into consideration with a view to consolidating our evidence base at instrument and action level, confirming or differing from the data collected through other tools and presented in the main report.

Key messages

- The PI constitutes the appropriate instrument to pursue and promote political / policy dialogues.
- The PI is filling a critical niche in the EU's toolbox of EFIs.
- The PI is a flexible instrument. The implementation choices have made it an enabling instrument, fit for purpose, and reactive to emerging priorities / challenges. This flexibility is a luxury in the EU's toolbox, compared to the implementation modalities of the other EFIs.
- The broad geographical and thematic scope of the PI is an enabling characteristic of the instrument. However, given the relatively limited envelope of the PI, careful and strategic prioritisation is required for a targeted use of the instrument.
- It was suggested to revise the actual geographical coverage of the instrument in order to reflect the strategic importance / potential of partnerships with e.g. Central Asia and Africa.
- The resources invested by the FPI have enabled to deploy the PI quickly after its creation and to have already an impact on EU cooperation worldwide. In particular, FPI staff in EU delegations adds value to the implementation of the PI, what increases the effectiveness of the use of the funding available.
- The PI is performing well with regard to the EU's targets of climate change spending. Stakeholders called for a continued support to climate change action and environment, especially in a new international situation after the 2016 US elections.
- The lack of visibility of the PI has been identified as a weakness. More information and awareness raising activities are needed for the different stakeholder categories.

External stakeholder consultation

The meeting with the PI external stakeholders included representatives from many different sectors, ranging from environment and climate change, foreign policy, relations with particular partner countries / regions, public and cultural diplomacy, migration and human rights, international economics, business and digital economy.

Academia / think-tanks / research

Bruegel, Public Policy and Management Institute, NFG Research Group "Asian Perceptions of the EU", European Partners for the Environment, European Institute for Asian Studies, Friends of Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies, Carnegie Europe, and La Compagnia di San Paolo

Two separate contributions were submitted by email (ECDPM and the EU-LAC Foundation)

Civil society / Culture

EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, Climate Action Network Europe, Nature Code, European Union National Institutes for Culture, Goethe Institute, Equinoccio, Wildlife Conservation Society
International organisations
IOM, WWF, International Union for Conservation of Nature
Business
Eurochambres, European Business Organisations Worldwide Network, Plastics Europe, Digital Europe

External stakeholders unanimously agreed that the PI was filling a critical niche in the EU's toolbox. The approach implemented through the PI – based on the promotion of EU strategic priorities – and the support provided to cooperation, political and policy dialogues across a wide range of partner countries add value to the EU's external action. The EU decides which objectives it pursues and how with its distinctively foreign policy instrument. A consensus emerged on the fact that the promotion of partnership on an equal footing and the existence of mutual interests are success factors for the PI. This cooperation modality generates interest from partner countries which want to be considered as equal partners (e.g. cultural platform where the implementing partner was approached by non-strategic partners which would like to participate in the initiative). With the example of EU action on climate change supported by the PI, external stakeholders also emphasised that the PI was aligned with the EU's multilateral agenda and e.g. the international commitments made at COP21¹³⁸.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) working on values in challenging context outlined the dilemma between values and interests that the EU was facing. The key is to ensure that, in addition to actions directly aligned with / supporting EU values (e.g. actions on migration, conference on LGBT rights, corporate social responsibility (CSR), exchange of expertise on security and justice, study on death penalty), these values should be mainstreamed in all actions (e.g. on ETS in China, the EU requires consultation of local populations and the CIR requires the mainstreaming of horizontal objectives such as gender, human rights and democracy) because they constitute a critical dimension of its foreign policy (TEU).

Because of the nature of the instrument, the PI's direction is not decided in consultation with external stakeholders but decision-making remains as participatory as possible, from both an internal point of view (good coordination and consultation throughout the EC and the EEAS) and an external point of view to the extent possible (e.g. additional stakeholder consultation meetings organised in the context of the external evaluation, in-country consultation between EU delegations and Member States embassies).

The Partnership Instrument has a relatively small budget compared to most of the other EFIs, notably the EFIs managed by the Commission's Directorate-General for International cooperation and Development. In this context and to achieve results, it is critical that its use is strategic: the EU should clearly define its priorities and identify where it adds the more value. External stakeholders note that possibilities to use more the financial leverage of the PI should be more systematically explored (noting for instance that the possibility to use public private partnerships could be explored to increase the resources available).

The way the PI is deployed involves relatively important administrative costs for the FPI, which are a necessary trade-off to ensure an appropriate management of the instrument. There

¹³⁸ Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

was a strong consensus that this ensures the PI is adequately managed, remains flexible and provides the appropriate support to EU cooperation. The reduction of these costs would imply a reduction of the managing resources, what could in turn put in jeopardy the quality of delivery and results of the instrument. Stakeholders expressed their concern that, given the fact that the resources of Commission services were already strained, it was critical to maintain the capacity of PI institutional stakeholders necessary for direct management of PI actions (the stakeholders consulted highly value direct management over delegated management).

As regards the administrative burden on the implementing partners, one stakeholder provided anecdotal evidence of the scope for its reduction by pointing to the fact that implementing partners have to produce hard copies of a plane ticket (and not their electronic ticket) for the travelling expenses to be reimbursed. This burden is however not specific to the PI but results from requirements set in the Financial Regulation, the Common Implementing Regulation and further operationalised in EU documents that guide implementation, i.e. PRAG and Companion.

A few stakeholders (implementing partners and think tanks) noted the existence of weaknesses in the way the PI was implemented and / or the actions designed. These included the need to: (i) effectively mainstream horizontal themes (e.g. diversity – including gender balance and disability – for conference panels); and (ii) identify local partners, existing events, etc. to partner up and adding an EU dimension to activities of other actors, which is expected to increase the value for money of the support, strengthen the political and financial leverage of PI support and create more ownership for local partners, while reducing the risk of overcrowding. At the level of the design of activity, it was also suggested to update the methods used in communication activities (e.g. it was suggested to introduce live surveys);

A minority of stakeholders ask what the steps to consolidate the monitoring and evaluation framework were. They noted the measurement challenge, notably with regard the impact of PI actions and in particular of public diplomacy actions. The (very) long time span of some of these actions is challenging, and so is the issue of the measurement of the perceptions on the EU. The FPI recognised these challenges and outlined that work is ongoing, e.g. building on the perception study to develop public diplomacy indicators.

The forward-looking discussion with external stakeholders focused on the following:

- Finalise the rethinking of the promotion of mutual interest and align the architecture of the EU's toolbox accordingly and to put the emphasis on forward-looking (rather than reactive) programming
- Rationalise the toolbox to simplify the general architecture and overcome the silo mentality. Further strengthening the coherence of the EU's toolbox is expected to ensure a sustainable impact and to help the EU to deliver its external action agenda – e.g. by setting up thematic policy framework for discussion (for instance on migration)
- Ensure the financing instrument dedicated to cooperation takes into consideration the needs of the different categories of partner countries (from strategic partners to emerging countries)
- Strengthen the strategic use of the PI to ensure the most cost-effective use of its relatively limited envelope – that includes the need for the instrument to be more forward looking than reactive and to carefully consider subsidiarity and EU added value (including in coordination with Member States actions)
- Ensure that EU values are mainstreamed in the actions supported
- Further strengthen coordination in the field (EU delegations, Member States and other stakeholders present)

- Reduce the administrative burden for implementing partners

Institutional stakeholder consultation

Representatives from the European Parliament and from Member States attended the institutional stakeholder consultation meeting:

European Parliament
MEP's assistants (including AFET Committee and Working group on EFIs), AFET committee member, DG External Policies
Member States
Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and United Kingdom

Institutional stakeholders recognise the value added to EU cooperation by the PI since 2014. The political and policy leverage it creates fills a gap in the EU's toolbox and provides an appropriate instrument to pursue cooperation with partner countries (ranging from Strategic Partners to graduated countries and upper middle income countries) on an equal footing. The "PI window" has enabled the EU to position itself on key issues, notably challenges of global concern such as climate change, and promote its strategic priorities. Institutional stakeholders focused in particular on the following dimensions:

- Member States share a positive feedback on the Partnership Instrument and its performance to date and some Member States called for a strengthening of the instrument, including "large" Member States. Smaller Member States perceive the PI as creating opportunities for them to be more influential in the design and implementation of actions (e.g. through their participation to exchanges – for companies and local administrations – and TAIEX actions) than on their own. Overall, the PI is perceived as a niche instrument that fills a gap in the EU's toolbox. There is a growing interest for what the PI can do in partner countries, sometimes in very different situations, given its global reach and its encompassing thematic scope.
- However, a minority of Member States highlighted that there was a continued need to enhance the coherence with Member States initiatives to avoid any duplication and/or contradictions with PI-supported actions (larger Member States raised the issue of tensions with the Gateways/business avenue actions in partner countries where they have already actions with similar objectives).
- Member States expressed their interest in receiving more (implementation) data on PI-supported actions, notably financial data on implemented / ongoing actions, and on the monitoring and evaluation framework to measure results (noting in particular the challenge in measuring the impact of public diplomacy actions). While information of the Member States might happen on an informal basis (notably in third countries, where coordination is ongoing between EU delegations and Member States bilateral embassies), there is scope for improvement. A Member State suggested adopting the model of the Market Access Advisory Committee, which monthly meetings provide an opportunity to share information between concerned stakeholders. Member States also expressed their interest in being more involved in the PI decision-making as they consider discussing the orientation of the instrument is in their strategic interest.

However, the current decision-making framework, reflecting the foreign policy nature of the PI, does not provide for Member States role in the programming of the instrument (but only for the approval of the AAPs).

- The discussion emphasised also the need to make a strategic use of the instrument. In the context of a relatively limited envelope in particular, it is critical to define EU priorities, set expectations realistically and ensure that the PI is indeed deployed as a last resort instrument. Reflections on the actual use of the Partnership Instrument is paralleled by a (re-) thinking of the allocation of the funding available. First, at the micro level, a few Member States highlighted the imbalance in the allocation and actual spending of PI support, identifying Central Asia as the poor child of the PI – that point has already been taken into consideration and more efforts are progressing cooperation with that region. Second, at the macro level, the adoption of the EU's Global Strategy provides a strategy framework for EU external action that the PI contributes to implement (the second phase of the AAP 2016 and the first phase of the AAP 2017 are in line with this document and structured along the strategic priorities identified).
- There is a consensus on the need to increase the visibility of the PI and with it the EU's visibility. The public diplomacy component of the PI is attracting attention and Member States were also keen to ensure that visibility objectives are mainstreamed in the actions.
- Looking forward, the rationale of the EU's toolbox needs to be brought to the fore more. In particular, each instrument needs to be underpinned by a narrative framework on how the EU engages with partner countries through the most appropriate instrument. That is expected to be linked to the strategic discussions on EU priorities and the geographical balance of the funding available across the different partner countries and the category they belong to.

Online Public Consultation

Profile of Respondents

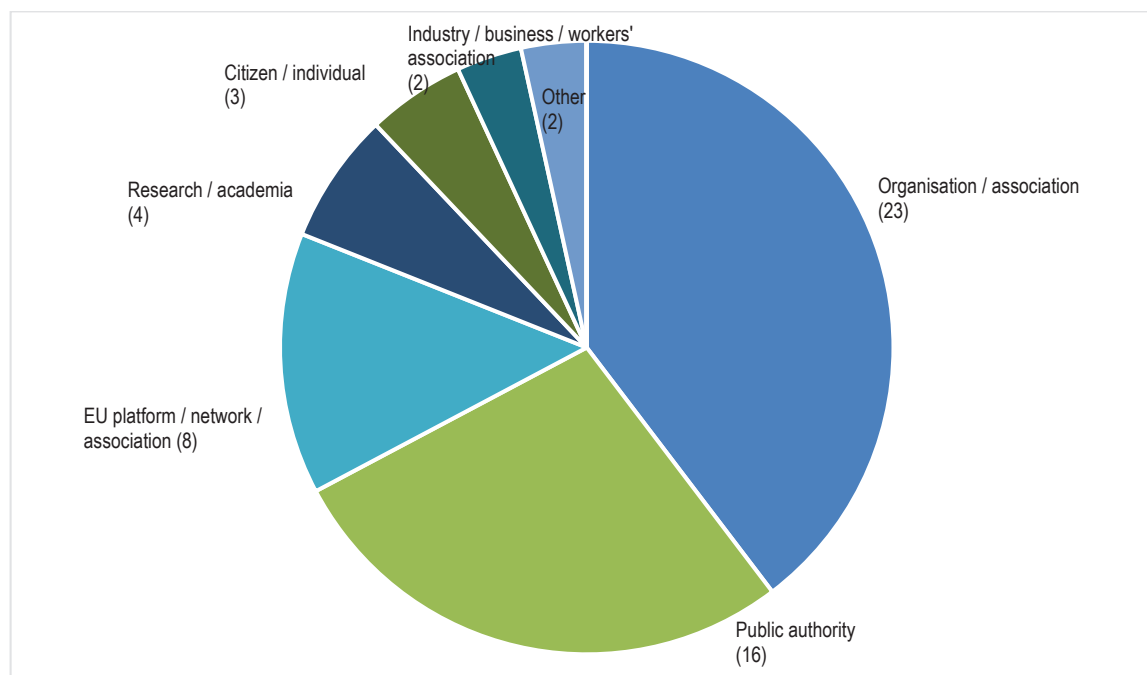
Overall, 124 responses to the OPC on EFIs were received, of which 52 substantial responses with answers to the PI-specific questions and additional comments on the PI / EFIs submitted, while the other responses (72) replied to questions related to other EFIs). Six responses have also been submitted via email directly by an EU platform (European Disability Forum) and an international organisation (the FAO), as well as by public authorities from Member States. The questionnaires returned by Member States via email also included their answers to forward-looking questions raised during the face-to-face meeting with institutional stakeholders in Brussels.

The breakdown of the total number of responses (58, namely 52 received online and six submitted separately) is presented in Figure 8.

Respondents indicated whether they represented a particular organisation or provided their input in their individual capacity. 39.7% of the responses were submitted by organisations / associations and 27.6% by public authorities. Respondents were further profiled on the basis of the country of residence. The geographical spread of the responses is very wide and cover Member States (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France with a separate entry submitted by the Government of Nouvelle Calédonie, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, with 32% of the answers coming from Belgium) and partner countries (Albania, Haiti, Israel, Jordan,

Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, the USA and Yemen). Where respondents have indicated their responses could be published and attributed, it is specified in the analysis below.

Figure 8: Breakdown of 58 responses by sector of respondents' profile



Analysis of the PI

The questions raised focused on the performance of the PI to date and included:

- How well do you think the PI has addressed its objectives?
- Do you think the PI was an adequate instrument to respond to global challenges and to advance EU and mutual interests and that it enhanced the EU's ability to engage on these issues?
- Do you think the PI has delivered relevant and useful results advancing co-operation and dialogue with a range of countries on issues such as climate change, the protection of the environment, energy, economic and trade relations or the promotion of the European Union's values?
- Do you think the PI has allowed the EU to engage strategically with countries that are not covered by other EU instruments and by focusing on policy issues for which no other funding sources are available? Has the PI been complementary to the other EU external financing instruments?

How well do you think the PI has addressed its objectives? (26 responses submitted)

The respondents share the view that the PI is meeting its objectives in general terms (despite the lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework when the PI was set as noted by one respondent), notably because it is well aligned with EU interests and political agenda. A respondent from a European network based in Belgium outlines in particular that the PI has provided the means to engage at the appropriate level with emerging countries, which would have otherwise fallen out of the traditional cooperation channels.

Two issues are raised:

1. Two respondents raise their concerns as to the possible contradiction between what the PI is doing in the field of trade and economic diplomacy and what Member States are undertaking. They call for better coordination between the two levels of action. It is noteworthy that they use the same wording which seems to indicate a degree of coordination in their response (a public authority from Italy and a public authority from Belgium).
2. A response from a public authority in Poland raises a concern as to the use of the PI in relation with the concept of strategic partners. They outline the challenges in the relation with the Russian Federation and called for an appraisal of the partnership, underlining that support could be deployed elsewhere.

Do you think the PI was an adequate Instrument to respond to global challenges and to advance EU and mutual interests and that it enhanced the EU's ability to engage on these issues? (20 responses submitted)

Overall, respondents' tone is positive as regard the capacity of the Partnership Instrument to respond to global challenges and advance EU and mutual interests. A contribution submitted by a Member State gives the example of the Arctic region where the PI could be used more to fight against climate change in line with the Paris agreement.

However, criticisms are still raised about the definition of EU interests actually pursued through the PI. A few stakeholders (environmental CSOs) share the view that more could be done to address global challenges, as for instance WWF Belgium which notes that EU interests seem to be limited to economic and trade interests (and also that CSOs such as itself are not involved in the design of PI actions). In the same vein, IUCN Belgium also raises the question of the actual contribution of the PI to the targets set for the climate change and biodiversity funding. The Government of Nouvelle Calédonie calls for enhanced communication on the possibility for Overseas Countries and Territories to engage with the PI (which might reflect the environmental concern in the Pacific region). Contradictory views are also expressed with regard to EU interests, and to the economic and trade agenda specifically: the two same respondents as under question 1 (a public authority from Italy and a public authority from Belgium) reiterate that PI actions might go against Member States efforts in third countries in that domain while another one responds that more could be done to pursue these economic interests in support of European SMEs.

Respondents do not provide evidence supporting their answers and a Polish public authority outlines that, given the relative novelty of the PI, it is still too early to assess if it is adequate to respond to global challenges.

Do you think the PI has delivered relevant and useful results advancing co-operation and dialogue with a range of countries on issues such as climate change, the protection of the environment, energy, economic and trade relations or the promotion of the European Union's values? (17 responses submitted)

Overall, even if they did not provide concrete evidence, respondents tend to agree that the PI is already successful. It triggers or strengthens a dialogue at the right level and around strategic topics, including global challenges such as climate change, with partner countries. Interestingly, one respondent notes that the PI is well synchronised with the agenda of partner countries, which tends to indicate that as a foreign policy instrument, it is important to build on the EU's and partners' mutual interest (e.g. in Mexico on issues related to biodiversity), as

well as to align with international developments to keep the momentum for action (e.g. of the momentum created for COP13 on biodiversity in Mexico).

The PI has not only allowed for bilateral but also for regional cooperation, which – on topics such as climate change ahead of COP21 – was considered successful. One German organisation notes that the PI allows to substantiate the EU's international agenda, for instance by supporting actions to implement the Paris agreement on climate change and meet the targets the EU has set to itself. However, authorities / organisations representing business interests in three Member States (Greece, Italy and Belgium) still note that the PI could be more successful if better coordination was achieved with Member States initiatives on trade promotion – while a Polish public authority calls for more PI support in that respect because not all Member States have resources available for that type of action.

The contribution of PI processes to the formulation of effective actions is noted: a Belgium European network recognises the value of PI processes in harnessing the necessary expertise to formulate potentially effective actions, to tailor cooperation and to adjust to new contexts. But there is scope for improvement according to IUCN, as the PI results could be strengthened if CSOs' expertise was better taken into consideration in the design of PI actions on global challenges.

Overall, the flexibility of the PI is considered to be a key strength and an enabling factor for cooperation between the EU and its partner countries.

Do you think the PI has allowed the EU to engage strategically with countries that are not covered by other EU instruments and by focusing on policy issues for which no other funding sources are available? Has the PI been complementary to the other EU external financing instruments? (20 responses submitted)

The responses provided to this question are supported by little evidence. There seems to be an agreement that the PI has provided an instrument for cooperation with countries that are not eligible to other [bilateral] assistance from the EU. The PI has enabled to maintain and further cooperation with these countries on a wide range of topics. More generally, Slovakia in particular notes that the PI is a niche instrument in the EU's toolbox, strengthening the EU's capacity to pursue different types of agenda with different partners through the most relevant instruments.

Concrete evidence of complementarities between the PI and other actions / instruments is very limited. One response indicates a good degree of coherence with the creation of synergies between the PI action and BIOFIN, a DEVCO funded project. Calls for more coordination are made in general terms by authorities / organisations representing business interests on trade missions to third countries and by environmental organisations on environment-related actions (e.g. WWF Belgium on coordination between the PI and the DCI GPGC thematic programme, which however does not specify how coordination should be improved).

The online public consultation also invited respondents to share any other views they would have on the PI (17 responses submitted) and on EFIs (32 responses submitted).

Views submitted on the PI are disparate.

One respondent values the very active involvement and inputs from the EU delegation in Mexico, involvement which allowed seizing the opportunity window in that partner country (but the topic of the action implemented is not specified).

Other respondents formulate a number of recommendations:

1. Need for enhanced consultation of CSOs at the design stage (environmental CSOs, business organisations)
2. Definition of a monitoring and evaluation framework and its rolling out (German organisation), including the definition of public diplomacy indicators (research institute, the Netherlands)
3. Need to enhance communication on the PI at several levels:
 - a. Inform more Member States and involve them more at the design stage (Polish public authority)
 - b. A German organisation questions the focus of the support on strategic partners and “short term goals notably linked to specific negotiations”.
 - c. Four Member States call for better communication on PI support, where it is deployed (in particular to also reflect on regional / global actions) and how this support is articulated with the multilateral agenda of the EU
 - d. Communicate more on the partnership dimension of the PI to avoid it is seen as a unilateral instrument (German organisation), and possibly to increase partners’ buy-in as they would value a more equal relationship with the EU
4. Need to strive for more coherence of EU external action and between EU internal and external policies
5. Revision of the procurement rules for Business avenues to increase the cost-effectiveness of PI support
6. Request for monitoring evidence on actions on disability / mainstreaming disability (ONCE and European Disability Forum) and for the mainstreaming of children-related concerns (Lumos)
7. Exploring the potential for a combined support ENI-PI

Additional remarks on EFIs are less relevant as they largely relate to respondents’ specific experience with particular projects or on specific topics not covered by the PI. The analysis notes that the following is interesting for the PI:

- External stakeholders welcome the new visibility guidelines, more user-friendly, and renewed transparency efforts while the CIR does not seem to have significantly contributed to transparency – this seems to echo the recurrent comment about the lack of information on PI support publicly available in general and communicated to Member States in particular;
- There is an underlying concern for the administrative burden borne by implementing partners, with a reference to the too fast changing reporting templates that they are required to use, and to the excessive burden put on SMEs to participate in the procurement process under the instruments (including under the PI);
- The capacities of EU delegations need to be strengthened by increasing number of staff (United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia section);
- CSOs and LAs re-emphasise their interests in being more involved in the design and implementation of the actions / projects supported by the EFIs;
- Environmental organisations request information on the 20% climate target of EU spending for a better tracking of EU objective;

- The FAO emphasises overall the importance of enhancing the flexibility of the external instruments, for the EU to be in a position to provide a mix of responses to global challenges.

Lastly, there was a consensus among Member States which replied in writing to forward looking questions on the future of the EU's toolbox on the need for:

- Flexible instruments, to respond to changing priorities / circumstances / challenges
- Simplification of the toolbox

Enhanced transparency and accountability of the use of EU support through the EFIs.

ANNEX 3. PI COMMON INDICATORS

Source: Partnership Instrument Programme Statement for 2018, PI mid-term external evaluation¹³⁹

Outcome indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2014)	Achieved values (September 2016)				
		Specific obj. 1	Specific obj. 2	Specific obj. 3	Specific obj. 4	Total
OC1: Number of processes related to state-level and sub-state level (bilateral, regional, multi-lateral) partnership strategies and policy dialogues which have been influenced.	0	8	4		4	16
OC2: Number of processes related to non-state level partnership/agreements which have been influenced	0	4	1	1		6
OC3: Number of processes related to partner country approaches to challenges of global concern which have been influenced.	0	7	1			8
OC4: Number of processes related to partner country practices on challenges of global concern which have been influenced	0					0
OC5: Number of processes related to the positions partner countries take in the run-up to or during regional/international fora which have been influenced	0	4				4
OC6: Number of processes related to partner country approaches beneficial to the achievement of the Europe 2020 strategy which have been influenced	0	3	2	1		6
OC7: Number of processes related to partner country practices beneficial to the achievement of Europe 2020 strategy which have been influenced	0	1				1
OC8: Number of processes related to partner country practices on trade, investment and business which have been influenced	0	2		3		5
OC9: Number of processes related to the removal of barriers to market access, investment and business which have been influenced	0	1		1		2
OC10: Number of processes related to the negotiation, implementation or enforcement of EU trade and investment agreements with partner countries which have been advanced	0			3	1	4
OC11: Change in EU companies' perceptions of the business, trade and investment climate in partner countries	0		1			1
OC12: Percentage of participants targeted by outreach and advocacy events who acknowledge a positive change in their perception of EU and/or international policies and standards	0					
Total	0	30	9	9	5	53

¹³⁹ See external evaluation report, Volume II: Final Report - Annexes, Annex 8

Output indicators¹⁴⁰

Indicators	Baseline (2014)	Achieved values (September 2016)	Number of relevant actions	Of which, have reported data
OP1: Number of occasions where an activity under the Action has improved the basis for the activation, renewal or moving forward of a process	0	98	67	19
OP2: Number of occasions where an activity under the Action has improved the basis for a process which leads to the adoption of, or approximation to, EU and/or international standards	0	9	46	6
OP3: Total number of knowledge-based products developed	0	46	58	25
OP4: Number of people participating in an event	0	29,201	73	25
OP5: Percentage of participants in the event who report having enhanced their knowledge	0	86%	56	2
OP6: Number of EU companies participating in the event	0	54	36	3
OP7: Percentage of participating EU companies who report an enhancement of their knowledge	0	0	36	0
OP8: Number of written statements (with recommendations/ conclusions, etc.) emanating from the event	0	120	46	6
OP9: Number of press releases/policy briefs/opinion pieces etc. produced by an activity under the Action	0	109	46	5

^{140, 141} Through data collection exercise, relevant activity and output indicators were identified depending on the nature of each action. The number of these relevant actions is indicated in the column "Number of relevant actions". However, only a subset of these actions were reporting data against these indicators, as indicated in the column "Of which, have reported data". This implies that the breakdown presented in the tables is likely to underestimate what the PI has been supporting / contributing to in terms of activities and outputs.

Activity indicators¹⁴¹

Indicators	Baseline (2014)	Achieved values (September 2016)	Number of relevant actions	Of which, have reported data
A1: Total number of events organised and supported (aggregated)	0	209	70	50
Number of visits, exchanges, study tours	0	6	13	6
Number of business missions	0	20	8	4
Number of technical meetings	0	39	17	11
Number of group events*	0	83	35	31
Number of training activities	0	28	14	9
Number of outreach and advocacy **	0	33	13	6
A2: Person-days of expertise or technical assistance provided	0	2,092	57	11
A3: Number of public/media/communication campaigns organised and implemented (aggregated)	0	5	36	6

(*) Conferences, debates, workshops, seminars

(**) Networking events, cultural collaboration activities

ANNEX 4. ACRONYMS

AAP	Annual Action Programme
AFET Committee	European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs
CIR	Common Implementation Regulation
COP	Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFI	External Financing Instrument
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EU	European Union
FPI	Service for Foreign Policy Instruments
GD	Greenland Decision
GPGC	Global Public Goods and Challenges
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IL	Intervention logic
INSC	Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation
IPA	Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
M2M	Machine-to-machine
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MTR	Mid-Term Review
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PI	Partnership Instrument
PSF	Policy Support Facility
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange

ANNEX 5. EXTERNAL EVALUATION

The external evaluation can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/public-consultation-external-financing-instruments-european-union_en