From Power Mediation to Dialogue Support?

Assessing the European Union's Capabilities for Multi-Track Diplomacy

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Research Report

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Content

1 Introduction

In November 2009, the Council of the European Union adopted a "**Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities**", as part of its efforts to implement the 2003 European Security Strategy. This document reflected, among other things, the wish to maximize the use of mediation as a preventive diplomacy tool before the outbreak of violent conflict; to employ mediation and dialogue in a holistic fashion by pursuing "both a top-down and a bottom-up approach in parallel tracks, which reinforce and inform each other (Council of the EU 2009, 7); and to "optimise the use of existing tools and instruments in the area of mediation by ensuring close co-operation and co-ordination, internally and with other actors, leading to coherence and complementarity" (ibid., 11).

Nearly a decade later, do the current capacities of EU institutions in the field of mediation and dialogue support match these ambitious aspirations? This report seeks to answer this question, by assessing EU capabilities for multi-track diplomacy from a 'whole-of-society' perspective, as defined in the Horizon 2020-funded project "Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding" (WOSCAP). **Multi-track diplomacy (MTD)** is defined here as a specific approach to EU foreign policy intervention, with a primary emphasis on diplomatic initiatives aimed at supporting conflict prevention and peacebuilding, primarily through negotiation, mediation/or and dialogue across different levels (Tracks) of engagement within partner countries. MTD is highly compatible with a **whole-of-society perspective** on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as it rests on the assumption that transforming complex and multi-dimensional conflicts requires an inclusive approach which does not solely focus on elite bargaining but requires constructive interactions with multiple conflict stakeholders and affected constituencies in order to reach a sustainable settlement. Such an approach thus implies a shift away from a sole reliance on traditional state diplomacy and Track I muscled mediation. It stresses instead the need for coordinated efforts by multiple third-party actors to support dialogue across various levels of society through diversified methods of 'soft power' diplomacy, according to the various stages of conflict and peacebuilding. The report will thus analyse the timing, nature and dimensions of EU multi-track diplomacy in war-affected or post-war contexts outside of its borders, in order to assess whether its actual capabilities for dialogue and mediation support match its ambitiously-stated goals with respect to **proactive engagement, horizontal coherence and integration, and vertical inclusivity**.

The empirical findings are primarily drawn from four case study reports produced by WOSCAP local project partners in Georgia (Macharashvili et al. 2017), Ukraine (Litra et al. 2017), Mali (Djiré et al. 2017) and Yemen (Eshaq/al-Marani 2017), which are based on extensive in-country interviews, as well as a desk-based study on the case of Kosovo (Van der Borgh et al. 2016). Additional secondary literature is used to back up these sources, in addition to primary data gathered through interviews with eight (current or former) staff members of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in HQ or EU Delegations. The analysis presented here thus combines objective assessments by local experts and subjective accounts by EU officials and relevant local stakeholders in the respective intervention contexts of the EU's capabilities and track-record in the area of multi-track diplomacy.

The report is organised as follows: **Section 2** defines a whole-of-society approach to multi-track diplomacy and relates it to the EU's own ambitions and expectations. **Section 3** examines to what extent actual EU MTD practices in Georgia, Ukraine, Mali, Yemen and Kosovo since the 2007 Lisbon Treaty (i.e. the timeframe for this research) reflect a proactive, coordinated, coherent and inclusive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. **Section 4** assesses the internal (institutional, political and operational) and external (local, national and international) constraints which affect the EU's ability to adopt a whole-of-society approach to MTD. Finally, **Section 5** offers some conclusions and derives key policy recommendations for EU actors, and instruments to maximise their existing and potential capabilities for proactive, coherent, coordinated and inclusive MTD engagement in conflict-prone or conflict-affected environments.

2 EU Ambitions for a Whole-of-Society Approach to Multi-Track Diplomacy

This section serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it provides a concise overview of the key concepts used in this report.[1] On the other hand, it presents current EU policy guidelines on conflict prevention and peacebuilding as being closely aligned with the goals and principles of whole-of-society peacebuilding and multi-track diplomacy.

2.1 EU as a global peacebuilding actor

Given the EU's history and origins as a 'peace project', the promotion of conflict prevention and peacebuilding lies at the heart of its foreign policy. According to the Lisbon Treaty, the EU aims to promote peace (Title I, Article 3-1), and draws its understanding of peace from its own values and principles "that have inspired its creation, development and enlargement" (Title V, Article 21). These principles translate into foreign policy goals inspired by a comprehensive definition of peace which includes not only security and stability (i.e. absence of armed violence), but also addresses the root causes of conflict by promoting democracy, good governance, human rights, sustainable development, and human security. These principles are stressed in the EU approach to situations of state fragility elaborated in 2007, which advocated for the deployment of 'soft power' intervention: "Fragility is most often triggered by governance shortcomings and failures (...). Supporting democratic governance, state building, reconciliation processes and human rights protection, as well as promoting political will for reform through dialogue and incentives, rather than through conditionality and sanction, should guide EU action" (European Commission 2007, 8-9). This comprehensive approach to peacebuilding also lies at the heart of EU guidelines on conflict prevention as set out in the Gothenburg programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (2001), the European Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention (2001), and the 2003 European Security Strategy which underlined the need to use all conflict prevention instruments at the EU's disposal "including political, diplomatic, military and civilian, trade and development activities" (EU Council 2003, 12).

More recently, the 2016 European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) sought to redefine EU values and external interests in a "more unstable and more insecure" regional and global environment (EEAS 2016a). While the 2003 European Security Strategy primarily focused on external security and threats, the EUGS takes stock of the growing interconnections between internal and external security, arguing that "our security at home entails a parallel interest in peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions" (ibid., 14). It is thus in the EU's interest to "pursue a multi-level approach to conflicts acting at the local, national, regional and global levels" while also employing a "multi-lateral approach engaging all those players

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present in a conflict and necessary for its resolution" (ibid., 29). As will be argued here, this ambition strongly echoes a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding.

When it comes to the EU's goals and interests in each context of external intervention, policy and strategic documents guiding EU action and determining the funding lines and priorities in third countries provide useful indications for what EU actors aim to achieve, and how. For example, concerning the case studies under scrutiny in this report, the latest country Strategy Paper for **Yemen** (covering the period 2007-2013) locates the EU's foreign policy objectives in the pursuit of stability, security, good governance and development cooperation in an integrated manner (Eshaq/al-Marani 2017, 11). Besides country strategies, other documents set the framework for mid- and long term EU engagement in conflict prevention and peacebuilding support. In the Association Agreement for **Georgia** (EU 2014), Article 9 on peaceful conflict resolution sets out the basis for the EU's strategy for supporting peace and reconciliation across conflict divides. EU engagement in Georgia is also defined by the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission, which aims (among other objectives) to contribute to long-term stability in Georgia (article 2.2.), including by supporting "the reduction of tensions through liaison, facilitation of contacts between parties and other confidence building measures" (article 3.3).[2] In **Mali**, EU peacebuilding activities are also conditioned by the mission mandate of the EU Special Representative in Sahel, whose political objectives include support for the "long-term stabilisation" of Mali (Art 2.3).[3] Similarly, the 2014-2020 National Indicative Programme for Mali indicates that "The European Union … remains a key interlocutor of the Malian authorities in the stabilisation, peace and reform process in Mali".[4] According to these various declarations and mission statements, EU foreign policy objectives in conflict-affected third countries in the EU neighbourhood and beyond seem to encompass both elements of 'negative peace' (stability) and 'positive peace' (democratisation and reconciliation), at least when it comes to the mandate of actors and instruments at the forefront of EU multi-track diplomacy efforts.

2.2 Multi-track diplomacy

Multi-track diplomacy (MTD) represents a key policy domain or 'cluster' of EU intervention, alongside other 'soft power' approaches such as humanitarian aid, development assistance and support for security sector reform and democratisation. As will be argued below, MTD is anchored in a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding along three dimensions: temporal proactiveness, horizontal coherence/integration and vertical inclusivity. Diplomacy will be described here as a tool of foreign policy and influence, which might be used to advance strategic national interests as well as to support (or export) the normative values of peace, human rights, democracy or good governance. In the context of the EU, this concept will be mainly used in reference to diplomatic, technical and financial instruments deployed by EU actors to engage directly or indirectly in negotiation, mediation or dialogue processes in conflict-affected environments. The Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities (thereafter: EU Concept) endorsed by the EU Council in 2009 will be used as the primary reference that defines the EU's approach to multi-track diplomacy. It portrays European diplomacy at the forefront of international efforts to prevent and resolve armed conflicts through negotiated settlements. On the one hand, it is argued that the EU is seen as "a credible and ethical actor in situations of instability and conflict", which makes it "well placed to mediate, facilitate or support mediation and dialogue processes" (Council of the EU 2009, 2). On the other hand, mediation and dialogue are also seen as

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2   See Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of 15 September 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia.
Available online at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:248:0026:0031:EN:PDF
3   See Council decision extending the mandate of the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, February 2017.
Available online at: http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5458-2017-INIT/en/pdf
4   The NIP EU-Mali is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/programme-indicatif-national-ue-mali-2014-2020_fr

"effective, cost-efficient instruments for conflict prevention, transformation and resolution in all stages of ... conflict" (ibid, 4).

2.2.1 Diplomacy toolbox: negotiation, mediation and dialogue support

Diplomacy has been traditionally defined quite narrowly as "the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations" (Merriam Webster Dictionary 2015), but may also be understood more comprehensively as encompassing both coercive (e.g. diplomatic sanctions or court arbitration) and non-coercive means to entice, persuade or pressure one's interlocutor into adopting a certain course of action. This report focuses more particularly on three distinct but overlapping strategies that can be employed consecutively or simultaneously to effect change: negotiation, mediation and dialogue.

Negotiation can be broadly defined as a direct encounter aimed at reaching an agreement on a situation that is perceived as a problem or conflict. As bluntly but accurately expressed by Fisher and Ury (1992, xvii), "negotiation is a basic means of getting what you want from others". In processes of negotiations between the primary parties to an armed conflict, external actors might also provide one-sided **negotiation support** to one or other of the parties, in order to promote the overall goal of sustainable peacebuilding. As pointed out by leading conflict resolution scholars, power parity (or at least mutual recognition) between the disputants is a crucial factor for successful negotiations to come about (e.g. Young 1967, Bercovitch 1991). Third parties may thus contribute to the resolution of asymmetric conflicts by empowering disadvantaged groups, such as opposition parties, civil society actors including women's organisations, or even armed movements, to participate effectively in negotiations. Such strategies range from public advocacy on behalf of marginalised groups to discreet capacity-building support in order to inform them about peaceful strategies, negotiation options and skills, as well as to enhance their ability to devise fair and equitable peace agreements or to later abide by their commitments (Dudouet 2010, Wils/ Dudouet 2010).

Mediation also aims to reach an agreement among two (or more) parties through negotiation processes, but it "involves an additional party who is responsible for directing and supporting the flow of communication" (Berghof Foundation 2012, 50). Many scholars (and the EU 2009 Concept and related guidelines) distinguish formal mediation settings from unofficial **facilitation**, a third-party approach which "does not necessarily strive to reach an agreement... [but] primarily seeks to improve the relationship between the parties. Consequently, the participants in facilitated encounters do not have to be mandated to enter into a binding agreement" (Berghof Foundation 2012, 50).

Dialogue, like facilitation, is a less directive approach than mediation. The EU 2009 Concept defines it as "an open-ended process which aims primarily at creating a culture of communication and search for common ground, leading to confidence building and improved interpersonal understanding among representatives of opposing parties which, in turn, can help to prevent conflict and be a means in reconciliation and peace-building processes. Successful dialogue can de-escalate conflict and render more formal mediation unnecessary" (Council of the EU 2009, 3). Anchored in social-psychological approaches to peacemaking, dialogue underpins the belief that conflict is not an inter-state or inter-governmental phenomenon but an inter-societal one (Kelman 2010). There is also a more formal and official understanding of dialogue in the diplomatic 'toolbox' of the European Union, since the EU Council is involved in a range of high-level bilateral dialogues with third countries on issues of common interest. **Formal political dialogue** settings can be used to convey political messages in support of peace processes and may therefore "serve as entry points for dialogue and mediation processes aiming at conflict prevention and resolution" (Council of the EU 2009, 3).

2.2.2 Three normative approaches to third-party conflict intervention

The basic commonality behind the various strategies which have just been described is the fact that they are non-coercive, in the sense that they are not based on the use of physical force – although some do involve the threat of force. As such, they are often referred to as 'soft-power' foreign policy instruments (Nye 2004, Nielsen 2013). Beyond this commonality, however, they underscore quite distinct approaches to diplomacy. Herrberg, Gündüz and Davis (2009) have conceptualised three models of international peace mediation, which could be applied by extension to international diplomatic intervention. These models are anchored in three distinct peacebuilding schools or paradigms most commonly labelled as: conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation (Ramsbotham/Woodhouse/Miall 2011, Berghof Foundation 2012).

≡   **Power-based intervention** is led by powerful third-parties who use their leverage, incentives and threats of punishment ('carrot and stick' strategies) and manipulative tactics in order to get the parties to reach a settlement (e.g. Zartman/Touval 1985, Bercovitch 1991).

≡   **Problem-solving intervention** is employed by impartial facilitators promoting the parties' ownership of the process and outcome in order to generate creative solutions satisfying the underlying interests of all parties; additionally, the facilitators draw on external expertise and parallel tracks to address 'sticking points' through confidence-building measures (e.g. Kelman 2010, Fisher 2011).

≡   **Transformative intervention** supports the empowerment and recognition of a broad variety of actors in conflict societies with the aim of changing the relationships between the parties as well as their self- and mutual perceptions (e.g. Lederach 1997, Bush/Folger 1994).

As will be analysed in this report, since the Lisbon Treaty, EU institutions have used various diplomatic strategies aligned with one or several of these three approaches, according to their domestic or strategic interests, credibility, leverage and resources as well as the historical, geographic and cultural context of intervention.

There are intense scholarly debates on the comparative effectiveness between these approaches. Some authors (e.g. Sisk 2009, Bergmann/Niemann 2015) found that power-based mediation is positively correlated with success when associated with high leverage on the parties or process. Other authors (e.g. Carment et al. 2009) contend that facilitative strategies, which do not employ third party pressure, are more likely to lead to sustained peace. They stress the importance of other factors of effectiveness such as impartiality, credibility, expertise or empathy (Rauchhaus 2006). A third group of scholars (Fisher and Keashley 1991, Hopmann 2001, Böhmelt 2010) finds that mediation works best when combining different tracks and approaches. This brings us, finally, to the concept of multi-track diplomacy.

2.2.3 Multi-track diplomacy

The three normative approaches to third-party intervention that have just been described, underline multiple entry-points within a conflict-affected society from top-level decision-makers to grassroots communities. Table 1 below (see page 12) visualises the interconnections between the various strategies, tools and tracks of diplomatic engagement examined in this report. The term multi-track diplomacy was first coined by Diamond and McDonald (1993) to depict the interconnected activities, individuals and institutions that cooperate to prevent or resolve conflicts peacefully, primarily through (direct or mediated) dialogue and negotiation. The concept is anchored in a systemic approach to conflict analysis by explicitly focusing on the relationships between different actors in a given system. It targets multiple levels of society and decision-making simultaneously, in an inter-connected (or at best coordinated) manner.[5] The most

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5   The model originally proposed by Diamond and McDonald involves nine tracks: (1) Government, or Peacemaking through Diplomacy; (2) Nongovernment/Professional, or Peacemaking through Conflict Resolution; (3) Business, or Peacemaking through

commonly-used classification of the main levels of societal interaction in conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes stems from Lederach's (1997) pyramid. It consists of three main tracks:

- **Track I** refers to official discussions between high-level governmental and military leaders focusing on ceasefires, peace talks, treaties and other agreements. Often associated with power-based, deal-brokering diplomacy by external mediators, Track I peace processes are typically limited to a small number of national stakeholders. While the participation of armed groups and other potential spoilers is justified by the need to ensure the sustainability of the resulting agreements, other segments of society tend to be excluded from such processes (Dudouet/Lundström 2016).

- **Track II** refers to unofficial dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at building relationships between civil society leaders and influential individuals who have the ability to impact Track I dynamics through lobbying, advocacy or consultation channels (and who are sometimes, although rarely, invited to participate in official and formal negotiations). When government representatives take part in non-governmental, informal dialogue, this is referred to as 'Track 1.5' (Allen-Nan 2005, Berghof Foundation 2012).

- **Track III** refers to people-to-people interactions at the grassroots level to encourage interaction and understanding between communities through meetings, media exposure, and political and legal advocacy for marginalised people and communities (EPLO 2013).

Track III diplomacy, in particular, represents a crucial dimension of the whole-of-society, bottom-up approach guiding the WOSCAP project. This track highlights international actors' need to engage with and support actors who are typically overlooked by the other diplomatic tracks, who make up the fabric of society and who are deeply affected by violent conflict (see examples in the next section). At the same time, grassroots dialogue encounters are hardly able to bring about negotiated settlements if they are not accompanied by top-down and 'middle-out' (Lederach 1997) strategies of inter-party bargaining and/or relationship-building. Hence, multi-track intervention highlights the need for international support to target complementary levels of intervention, and in particular, to ensure that these efforts are coordinated and mutually reinforcing, so that grassroots engagement may contribute to 'peace writ large' (CDA 2004) and that top-level intervention 'trickles down' across society.

2.3   Whole-of-society peacebuilding

2.3.1 From whole-of-government to whole-of-society EU foreign policy

The concept of multi-track diplomacy strongly echoes the 'whole-of-society' analytical lense adopted by the WOSCAP project to assess the capacity of EU institutions and instruments to design and implement comprehensive and inclusive peacebuilding support strategies. This approach draws on '**whole of government**' and joined-up government approaches in public administration, which seek to address different departments working in silos by applying a more coherent strategy to foreign policy (Martin et al. 2016, 18). However, while whole-of-government approaches primarily focus on the need for internal co-ordination and integration between various policy domains (especially development, diplomacy and defence) and tools of intervention (e.g. political, technical or financial instruments), the **whole-of-society** approach adds an additional layer of inclusive engagement by emphasising the roles of, and relations with, a wide range of social actors in the countries of intervention. It pays particular attention to the need to engage various constituencies beyond the state – such as local community leaders, traditional authorities, minority groups, the private sector, religious


Commerce; (4) Private Citizen, or Peacemaking through Personal Involvement; (5) Research, Training and Education, or Peacemaking through Learning; (6) Activism, or Peacemaking through Advocacy; (7) Religion, or Peacemaking through Faith in Action; (8) Funding, or Peacemaking through Providing Resources; (9) Communications and the Media, or Peacemaking through Information.

organisations, IDPs, women and youth – who have often been excluded or marginalised by the state. This approach follows the assumption that including a broader range of actors as well as taking into account the local traditions, realities and culture will lead to more effective and sustainable peacebuilding (Jarstad/Belloni 2012, Dillon/Reid 2000, Boege et al. 2009, O'Reilly et al. 2015, Dudouet/Lundström 2016).

The EU Comprehensive Approach designed in 2013 draws on a whole-of-government approach to foreign policy (Woollard 2013). It aims to improve internal coordination and to counter fragmentation among the security, diplomacy, trade, development and humanitarian sectors, and among the different actors engaged in these policy domains, in order to optimize the impact of the invested resources. This shall be achieved through: shared analysis, joint planning and where possible a single, common strategic vision; mobilizing the EU's different strengths and capacities in support of shared objectives; linking policy areas in internal and external action; and by making better use of the central role of EU delegations in coordinating EU dialogue and support in the field (European Commission 2013, EU Council 2014). While this **horizontal axis** of coordination and cooperation seeks to achieve a higher level of internal coherence, a second dimension – a **vertical axis** – is mentioned, that seeks to improve EU coordination and cooperation with international partners such as the UN, NATO or international NGOs. The synergies developed through improved coherence horizontally and vertically are the core of the comprehensive approach, also embodied by the term 'integrated approach' introduced by the 2016 EUGS. Figure 1 below visualises these two axes of intra-EU and inter-agency coordination.

Figure 1: EU Comprehensive Approach
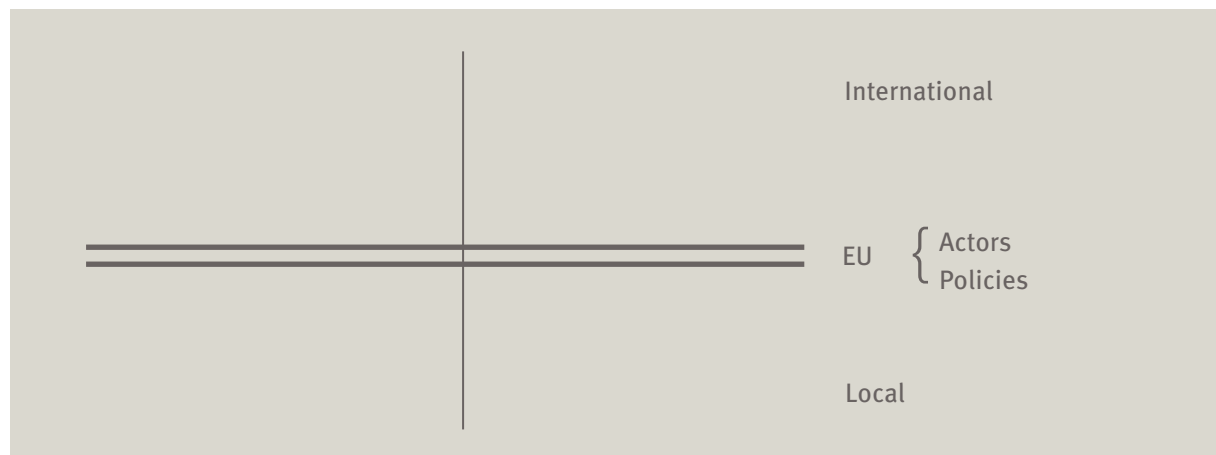
While the comprehensive (or integrated) approach focuses on EU internal coherence and its cooperation with other international organisations and partner countries, the role of non-state actors in the recipient countries is barely mentioned.[6] The EU Global Strategy, for its part, reflects a conscious attempt to address the complexity of conflict-affected societies by acknowledging the range of actors beyond the state and the dynamic relationships that link them. It highlights the need for a "more systematic recourse to cultural, inter-faith, scientific and economic diplomacy in conflict settings" (EEAS 2016a, 31). It also mentions the EU's ambition to not only partner with states and organisations but also with the private sector and civil society. One can thus argue that the EU global policy agenda is slowly moving closer to a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding that would not only encompass internal and international coordination but also multi-level interaction within the recipient societies – as visualised by the bell-shaped form in Figure 2, inspired by Lederach's multi-track triangle (1997).

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6 In the EU Commission's Communication on the Comprehensive Approach, civil society is mentioned once in 12 pages, as one actor to engage with in the future, among others such as major international NGOs, think-tanks, academia and public and private actors (EU Commission 2013, 9). In the Council conclusions on the EU comprehensive approach from May 2014, this largely remains unchanged but the importance of local ownership and local partners is further emphasized (EU Council 2014).

Figure 2: EU whole-of-society approach
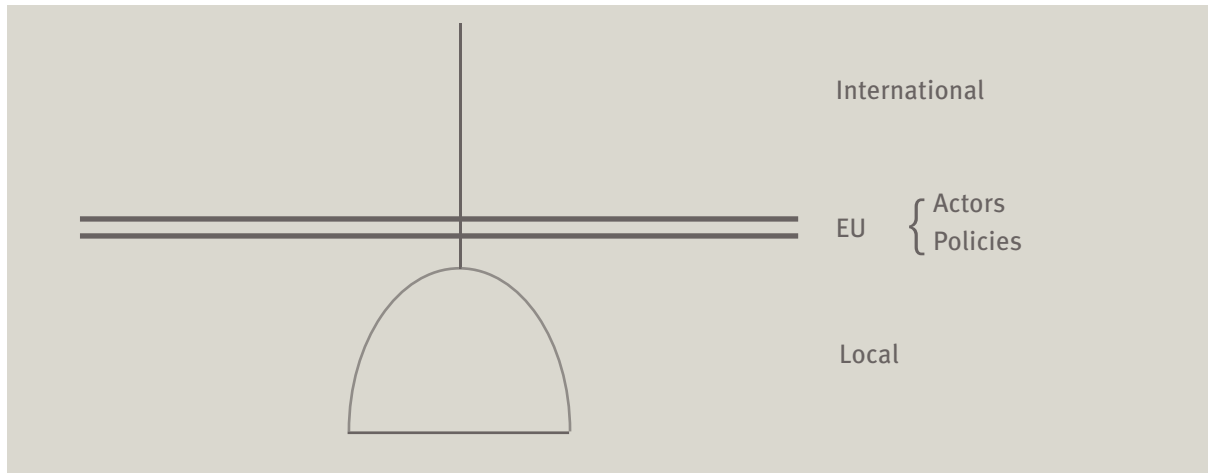
2.3.2 EU whole-of-society approach to multi-track diplomacy

The EU has outlined its expectations and ambitions with regard to foreign policy in general and mediation, conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding in particular in several documents. As will be argued below, these documents are closely aligned with the concepts of both multi-track diplomacy and whole-of-society foreign policy. They present a unique set of expectations which may be structured along three axes of intervention: a temporal axis, a horizontal axis and a vertical axis. These three axes build up the complex architecture of an EU whole-of-society approach to multi-track diplomacy.[7]

≡　**Temporal axis: A proactive, long-term approach**

The 2009 EU Concept presents a long-term approach to mediation and dialogue support in external crises and conflicts, testifying to the EU's ambition to be involved in different stages of peace processes from preliminary talks to the implementation phase of peace agreements. As pointed out by the document, mediation is "a relevant feature of crisis management at all stages of inter- and intra-state conflicts: before they escalate into armed conflict, after the outbreak of violence, and during the implementation of peace agreements" (Council of the EU 2009, 3-4). In particular, the importance of proactive and early intervention is emphasised: "Mediation is also a tool for bridging the gap between early warning and early action in crisis situations. For this to work, ready and flexible resources for facilitating and supporting sustained dialogue and mediation processes need to be available already at an early stage, ideally before the outbreak of violent conflict" (ibid, 7). In the 2016 EUSG, the importance of early action and preventive diplomacy and mediation is also highlighted (EEAS 2016a, 30). We thus define the first dimension of whole-of-society mediation and dialogue support as proactive engagement.

≡　**Horizontal axis: A coherent, integrated approach**

The second dimension of whole-of-society engagement refers to the horizontal axis of EU internal coherence, which reflects on the **interlinkages between MTD efforts and other policy domains**, and

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7　The first (temporal) axis is not included in the WOSCAP definition of whole-of-society peacebuilding (Martin et al. 2016). We have added it to this framework as it reflects the EU's central ambition to place conflict prevention at the heart of mediation and dialogue support (Council of the EU 2009).

how these impact upon the ability of the EU to deliver effective peacebuilding support. This includes, at Track I, opportunities to leverage economic relations (through incentives or pressure) to the benefit of mediation efforts, or, at Track III, the mainstreaming of dialogue and reconciliation support into other policy fields such as humanitarian action, human rights, gender equality or development. The EU 2009 Concept itself mentions the relevant guiding principles that should inform mediation and dialogue support, such as coherence with EU foreign policy objectives, comprehensiveness (synergies with other tools for conflict prevention and crisis management), risk assessment (with the overall goal of upholding the EU's credibility), and the necessity to effectively navigate the tension between addressing human rights violations and successful peace negotiations (Council of the EU 2009, 6-9).

Horizontal coherence also applies to the **wide range of EU actors involved in MTD**. The EU mediation and dialogue support architecture is complex and diversified, as it involves various entities, actors and instruments adapted to various intervention tracks and strategies. In Brussels, this includes: the EU Council and Presidencies; the High Representative for the EU Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (EU HR/VP); the new Division "Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation" (including its Mediation Support Team) at the European External Action Service (EEAS); the EU Commission through its various funding instruments; and the European Parliament, including through its European Parliamentary Mediation Support (EPMS). In-country, EU delegations (EUDs) and EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) or Envoys are often involved in direct and indirect MTD, in addition to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. In some cases, the EU member states (EUMS) also play significant roles for EU MTD, and their interventions with or without a direct EU mandate have important implications for the Union's ability to act coherently and impartially.

Horizontal integration also applies to the need for a complementary and coordinated approach to both **direct and indirect strategies of intervention**. The EU 2009 Concept presents five types of EU mediation involvement, from direct intervention as lead (or co-) mediator or facilitator, to indirect tools promoting, leveraging, supporting or funding dialogue and mediation processes (Council of the EU 2009).

Finally, horizontal integration encompasses the **inter-agency dimension of coordination at the international level**, between EU actors and other non-governmental, national or supranational agencies involved in MTD. In recent years, the field of mediation support has taken stock of the diverse range of third-parties involved in peace processes, and has sought to coordinate their roles by setting up multi-stakeholder peace support architectures (UN 2012a, Lehmann-Larsen 2014, Barth Eide 2013). The EU 2009 concept thus recognises the need for the EU to "strengthen its cooperation and networking with international partners, relevant non-governmental organisations and institutions, drawing on their knowledge, expertise and contacts" (Council of the EU 2009, 11) and asserts that in certain cases the EU should support other international actors (such as the UN, OSCE or African Union) who "may be in a better position to take the lead" (ibid.) instead of intervening directly. This dimension of horizontal integration will thus be assessed according to the extent to which EU institutions manage their relations with other agencies involved in MTD in a coherent and strategic way.

≡ Vertical axis: An inclusive approach

As stated in the introduction, the EU 2009 Concept recognises the need to "be involved in mediation processes at various levels – from the governmental to that of local communities" and to pursue "a top-down and a bottom-up approach in parallel tracks, which reinforce and inform each other" (Council of the EU 2009, 7). It also argues that thanks to the EU's "engagement at the grassroots level and its emphasis on civil society development, this holistic approach on conflict resolution contributes to the development of a unique and differentiated role for the EU amongst other providers of international peace mediation" (ibid.). The EU Concept also includes "promoting the participation of women" as a guiding principle, referring to UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 as an important framework and to the EU WPS framework itself. An earlier policy

document entitled "The Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security" (2008) considers "peace processes as opportunities to promote women's empowerment, gender equality, gender mainstreaming and respect for women's rights" (Council of the EU 2008, 11). But while the importance of including women in mediation is highlighted in these guiding documents, there is little reference to other marginalized groups such as youth or minorities. An ongoing revision of the Comprehensive Approach to 1325 recognises the need to consider global developments such as the new youth peace and security agenda.

At the global level, the EU is also committed to a number of international initiatives that place inclusivity at the heart of international assistance. For instance, as a member of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) – which brings together OECD donor countries and development agencies, partner countries (self-described as 'fragile and conflict-affected states'), and civil society representatives – the European Commission commits to the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. One of its guidelines, defined as the first of five Peace and Statebuilding Goals, aims to "foster inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution".[8] The promotion and inclusion of civil society, women and youth are referred to specifically. Although only one of the case study countries analysed in this report (i.e. Yemen) is an official New Deal member, its principles are highly relevant to EU engagement in the other cases and are indicative of the EU's general commitment to supporting political solutions to armed conflicts through inclusive conflict resolution by engaging with all relevant stakeholders.

Based on the key concepts reviewed so far, Table 1 below synthesises all of the components of EU multi-track diplomacy which will be used in Section 3 to assess the capacity of EU actors, institutions, instruments and policies to apply a whole-of-society approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Table 1: The Multi Track Diplomacy 'Toolkit'

Strategy	Entry-point	Assetts
Negotiation	Track I (top-down)	Leverage -positive: incentives -negative: (threat of) sanctions
Muscled Mediation		Impartiality Expertise Local outreach
Dialogue facilitation	Track 1.5 and Track II (middle-out)	Expertise Local outreach
Negotiation support		
Dialogue support	Track III (bottom-up)	Financial instruments Local partnerships

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8   See New Deal Principles here: www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/new-deal/new-deal-principles/, and New Deal Fact Sheet here: www.pbsbdialogue.org/media/filer_public/07/69/07692de0-3557-494e-918e-18df00e9ef73/the_new_deal.pdf. For a current assessment of the PSG1 Implementation, see Van Veen and Dudouet (2017).

3 Assessing EU capabilities for multi-track diplomacy

In line with the research framework of the WOSCAP project, capability shall be defined here as the "ability and capacity to achieve objectives in relation to the overall mission" and has to be understood "in relation to expectations and ambitions with regard to stated (policy) goals" (Martin et al. 2016, 22). The higher the expectations and ambitions with regard to these goals, the greater the capabilities needed to realise these. EU scholars assert that EU foreign policy has so far failed to meet the high ambitions expressed in various EU treaties and strategy papers, resulting in "a gap between the expectations placed on the EU and its actual capability to meet these expectations" (Nielsen 2013, 726). As predicted by Hill (1993), in the post-Cold War era the EU was expected by its own citizens and decision-makers to take a number of new global functions, including as a "mediator of conflict" beyond its borders, but was likely to face a capabilities-expectations gap due to its limited ability to agree on policy, its sparse resources and the lack of instruments at its disposal. More than two decades later, does this gap still persist, or do current EU capabilities meet the high expectations set in the 2009 EU concept and other policy guidelines in the area of multi-track diplomacy?

This section will assess EU capabilities for whole-of-society MTD along the three axes defined in Section 2, which will be used as benchmarks to examine whether the EU is fulfilling its ambition of proactive, coherent/integrated and inclusive action, or if there is indeed a persistent expectations-capabilities gap. The empirical data, presented through case study country boxes, is drawn from five case studies representing a mix of ongoing armed conflicts and 'frozen' conflicts in the European neighbourhood and beyond: Georgia, Ukraine, Mali, Yemen and Kosovo.

3.1 Proactive or reactive engagement?

One of the key strategic advantages of EU foreign policy when it comes to implementing its ambitious objective to engage in preventive diplomacy and early action in fragile or conflict-affected third countries lies in its long-term presence in-country, well before the outbreak of violence, in particular thanks to bilateral support in the areas of development cooperation, trade relations, governance reform, and electoral observation missions, amongst others. In all of the countries studied in the WOSCAP project, the EU has long-established diplomatic relations with the government, strengthened by the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the establishment of in-country EU Delegations. These have made the EU more visible in the partner countries, providing the government with an easily accessible channel to establish communications with EU representatives.

However, despite the EU's established presence on the ground, the case studies reveal some discrepancies with regards to the timing of engagement in dialogue and mediation activities. While the EU showed some commitment to (unsuccessful) early action in Ukraine and Yemen, or to preventive post-war diplomacy to mitigate the risks of violent relapses in 'frozen conflicts' such as Georgia and Kosovo, EU dialogue and mediation efforts in Mali seem to have been mainly reactive, with intervention coming several months after the outbreak of violence.

In **Ukraine**, successive diplomatic interventions by EU officials since the political crisis dividing the country in late 2013, reveal an attempt to engage in early action and to adapt strategies along the way. The involvement of the EU was initiated at first through multiple 'good offices' visits by representatives from the European Parliament, HR/VP Catherine Ashton and EU Commissioner Stefan Fule. For instance, Ashton travelled to Kiev on 10 December 2013, at a time when popular protests against the decision by President Yanukovych not to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement were still exclusively peaceful, for a meeting with the president in which he "promised not to resort to violence" (Litra et al. 2017, 17). Ashton promoted the idea of an inclusive roundtable to find a political solution to the rising tension and highlighted that violence was not an acceptable option. This pre-emptive attempt to start a mediation process was stopped short when the riot police "stormed the protesters in Kyiv while Ashton was still in town" (Litra et al. 2017, 15). When attacks by the law enforcement bodies against the protesters resulted in open violence, the EU supported the so-called 'Weimar Triangle' consisting of shuttle diplomacy attempts by the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Poland and France at the invitation of the EU HR/VP. This led to the signing of the Agreement on the Settlement of the Crisis in Ukraine on 21 February 2014 by President Yanukovych and the three opposition leaders. However, this intervention proved to be too late since the protesters rejected the deal, and on 22 February 2014 President Yanukovych fled the country. Therefore, although EU diplomacy demonstrated a political will to assume the role of mediator in the European neighbourhood, in this instance its timing was "often one step behind the events in Ukraine" (Litra et al. 2017, 16) or "at least slower than the expectations of Ukraine. When the efforts were undertaken, the solutions were no longer satisfying for either the protesters or the incumbent" (ibid, 18). Overall, one can thus assert that EU diplomats sought to engage in early efforts, but due to their aborted attempts to prevent escalation, eventually failed to act pre-emptively.

In **Yemen**, the EU also seemly sought to pursue a proactive approach to MTD. It was a party to the 'Friends of Yemen' (FoY) group established in January 2010, a year before the public unrest began in the Middle East. The aim of this group was to address the multiple causes of instability in Yemen such as the activities of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and internal conflict with Yemeni 'radicals' such as the Houthi opposition movement and South-based protestors demanding self-determination (Eshaq/al-Marani 2017). When popular protest awakened by the so-called Arab Spring threatened to escalate the conflict in 2011, UK and US Ambassadors together with the EU Head of Delegation initiated international discussions that led to an agreement on a peaceful transition process in Yemen with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (see below, Section 3.2.1).

In **Kosovo**, the EU seized the opportunity to deploy its diplomatic capabilities in order to help resolve the 'frozen conflict' over the status of the former province of Serbia and the fate of its ethnic Serbian minority, with the advent of a new, more pro-European government in Serbia that was intent on unfreezing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). A dialogue track (the Brussels Process) was initiated in 2011 following the adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 64/298 (2010) in support of an EU-facilitated Serbia-Kosovo dialogue. The first phase of technical dialogue was initiated, facilitated by Robert Cooper, Counsellor to the EU HR/VP. In October 2012, the dialogue moved to address more substantive issues under the direct facilitation of the HR/VP (Catherine Ashton followed by Federica Mogherini after November 2014), through regular high-level political meetings and technical working group meetings.

In **Georgia**, the EU failed to act pre-emptively to prevent the five-day armed conflict over the status of breakaway regions South-Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008. Georgia had in fact sought out EU assistance as a possible mediator and requested the EU place unarmed monitors or peacekeeping forces in the disputed territories; which failed to materialise (Nielsen 2013, 732). The Six-point Peace Plan that ended the war was mediated by the French President Sarkozy in the function of EU representative, due

to France holding the EU Presidency at the time. However, the implementation of this plan has proven difficult and the conflict is considered as 'frozen', while Russia has become more deeply entrenched in the separatist regions. The Geneva International Discussions, which were launched in October 2008 to address the consequences of the Georgia-Russia war and Russia's subsequent recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, are co-chaired by the EU. For eight years, it has been the only platform to discuss conflict resolution issues and can be assessed as acting as a preventive diplomacy instrument to pre-empt any further re-escalation of the conflict (Macharashvili et al. 2017).

Finally, in **Mali** the EU was rather slow and reactive in its diplomatic efforts to resolve the intra-state conflict which erupted in January 2012 when separatist and Islamist rebels launched a combined offensive in the north of the country, followed by a military coup d'état in the capital Bamako in March (Djiré et al. 2017). Although EU support for governance reform and development had been in place for many years, EU officials, along with the rest of the international community, were taken by surprise when the conflict broke out abruptly, as Mali had been considered a model for the region in terms of its democratic consolidation process since the early 1990s (Snijders 2015, 49). In fact, no record could be found of any official EU intervention in favour of a negotiated solution until the start of the official peace process in Algeria in July 2014 (see below Section 3.2.1). Until then, European engagement was primarily spearheaded by France's military intervention which began in January 2013 in an attempt to stabilise the country. EU support for the peace process mainly took the form of military and civilian missions to strengthen the Malian state apparatus and support the post-coup transition roadmap (Djiré et al. 2017), in addition to financial support for Track III dialogue and reconciliation activities (see below Section 3.3.2).

In the light of these five cases, there does not appear to be any clear pattern indicating why the EU attempted to engage proactively in some contexts, while it failed to do so in others. Possible factors that could have influenced the choice for early action might be linked to EU geostrategic interests (Ukraine) or the individual pro-activeness of specific European officials such as the EU HR/VP or the Head of Delegation.

The fact that these early attempts failed to prevent violent escalation, might be explained by a combination of external and internal constraints. In **Yemen**, pro-active intervention by the EU through the Group of Friends was impeded by the abrupt escalation of violence in 2015, leading to the withdrawal of all EU and EUMS in-country staff. In **Mali**, the unexpected eruption of the conflict also prevented EU actors on the ground from reacting swiftly to rapid developments which did not fit their political analysis of the Malian political settlement. Both the former Head of the EU Delegation to Mali[9] and the European Parliament referred to the need to learn lessons from the Malian experience and invest in early warning and preventive mediation mechanisms in key volatile regions "by operating a policy shift from reactive-centric approaches to a more adequate and efficient prevention-focused approach".[10] The failure of early intervention in **Ukraine** can be attributed to a slow reaction mechanism within the EU, which was partly caused by institutional dynamics, namely an internal leadership rotation within the European Parliament and Commission at the time of the Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine which prevented timely action; the EU's reaction was further impeded by political disagreements, namely the diverging visions and policies of the leading EU Member States on the way forward in dealing with Ukraine and, by extension, Russia. The process of internal negotiation over the formulation of common positions and action points prevented EU adaptability to the continuously evolving situation on the ground (Litra et al. 2017). The political will for action was there, but the process of internal decision-making was too slow. As asserted in the Global

9   See Coordination Team capacity4dev.eu, 'The Work of the EU Delegation to Mali: How to continue Development Projects in Times of Crisis'. Online at: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/article/work-eu-delegation-mali-how-continue-development-projects-times-crisis.
10   EU Resolution on the EU Comprehensive Approach and its implication on the coherence of EU external action, 21 February 2014, Article 39. Online at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2014-0138+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

Strategy (EEAS 2016a), early warning needs to be followed by early action, and this is only possible if early action also applies to intra-EU consultation for cohesive intervention.

Overall, we can assert that while most case studies seem to indicate a high level of political will for early and proactive diplomatic intervention in emerging or impending crises, preventive action has failed to bear fruit and has not succeeded in halting conflict intensification. As a result, EU mediation and dialogue support activities tend to remain primarily confined to short-term crisis response instruments during violent conflicts or in fragile post-war environments.

3.2 Horizontal coherence and integration

As reviewed in Section 2, the EU has long-established ambitions for a coherent and integrated (or comprehensive) approach to foreign policy, by seeking to coordinate the various actors, instruments and approaches mobilised in pursuit of peace, stability and prosperity beyond its borders. The WOSCAP case studies reveal that there are indeed many tools that can be, and have been, employed in support of MTD; these tools will be analysed here according to the two main strategic approaches to MTD observed in the five countries under scrutiny: power-based mediation by top-level EU diplomats, and dialogue facilitation/ support through confidence- or capacity-building by EU representatives in-country. The latter combines two of the approaches highlighted in Section 2, namely interest-based or problem-solving diplomacy aimed at facilitating the search for mutually-acceptable solutions among conflict stakeholders, and transformative diplomacy aimed at redressing power discrepancies by supporting the empowerment and recognition of potential 'spoilers' or neglected stakeholders. The purpose of this sub-section is to examine in turn the extent to which these various approaches to mediation and dialogue support are implemented in a coherent and integrated fashion, both internally (intra-EU) and externally (through international multi-agency collaboration).

3.2.1 Power-based mediation by top-level EU diplomats

Power-based Track 1 diplomacy is primarily conducted by the HR/VP, the EU Council or EU Member States (and, as will be seen below, in some instances by EUSRs). This form of diplomacy involves the use of bargaining, pressure and/or persuasion as part of a negotiation process, or muscled third-party mediation to induce the parties to come to an agreement. A key asset at this level is the leverage that can be brought to influence the process and outcome of negotiations. This is reflected in the EU's geographically selective engagement of Track 1 diplomacy: the EU leads the mediation efforts or lends support to mediation attempts by its Member States in conflicts in its direct neighbourhood such as in Ukraine, Kosovo and Georgia, where the prospects of EU integration are used (or could be used) as a powerful incentive towards one (in Ukraine and Georgia) or both (in Kosovo) conflict parties. The level of credibility and leverage of EU representatives is influenced by their perception as (im-)partial and (un-)coordinated mediators, as well as by the presence or absence of political or financial incentives and negative sanctions to put pressure on the parties to participate genuinely in dialogue processes – as opposed to using them as excuses to gain time while maintaining the status quo. Positive incentives or negative pressure can only be effective if EU Member States are united in their foreign policy aims and if the internal structures of the EU work together in a coordinated and coherent fashion. The less coherent and coordinated the EU is, the less leveraging power it can muster.

≡ Direct mediation

The 'frozen' conflicts in Kosovo and Georgia represent two contrasting cases of direct involvement by prominent EU diplomats in high-level mediation of a territorial dispute in the European neighbourhood. While power-based 'mediation with muscle' played a primary role in bringing about political dialogue in Kosovo, EU mediation in Georgia has so far been unable to leverage sufficient power to induce (or coerce) the conflict parties – including Russia – to conclude any significant agreement on the resolution of the protracted conflict in the South Caucasus.

In **Kosovo**, the EU has been leading the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, mainly through the prominent role of the HR/VP, where it acted as a muscled but non-partisan mediator; the process led to a common agreement on the normalisation of relations and the promotion of cooperation between Serbia and Kosovo in August 2015. While its credibility as an impartial mediator was hindered by the divisions among its Member States over the recognition of Kosovo as a sovereign state, the EU has made use of the parties' common interest in closer integration into the European Union as the main source of leverage for its third-party role. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo, the membership candidate status for Serbia and visa liberations for both countries have served as powerful and positive incentives for both governments to start a dialogue and to keep the communication channels open during tense times (Bergmann/Niemann 2016, Van der Borgh et al. 2016). Therefore, upon assessment it can be argued that conditionality has worked in favour of the peace process, although critiques highlight the fact that the content of the agreement reached is so vague that each party interprets it differently, which might impede smooth implementation. This approach has been termed the 'Brussels house style', where adversaries commit publicly to an empty agreement, "whose content is to be filled in later, often by EU officials, out of the spotlight" (Prelec 2013).

In **Georgia**, the EU is currently co-leading the mediated Geneva International Discussions with the OSCE and the UN, which bring together representatives from the main conflict parties – Georgia and Russia – as well as from Abkhazia and South Ossetia (in their personal capacities rather than as official delegations), and the United States. Georgia has no options for EU membership in the mid-term, although it does consider EU integration as a foreign policy priority: the country signed an Association Agreement and was granted visa liberalisation in 2017. While there are some opportunities for positive incentives for Georgia, there is very little the EU could offer South Ossetia, Abkhazia or Russia. Polarised positions among EUMS on what stance to adopt towards Russia, also prevent a more proactive approach and result in a sharp contrast between the EU's high level of economic, political and security interests in the region and its lack of actual leverage on the ground. The EU is thus seen as a mediator 'without muscle', and tries to position itself as an impartial third-party while highlighting its commitment to Georgian territorial integrity,[11] which impedes its perceived neutrality in the breakaway regions (Macharashvili et al. 2017, 34). As a result, the Geneva discussions has thus far failed to produce any tangible outcome, other than the establishment of an Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) to solve minor security incidents in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (see below Section 3.2.2). All primary stakeholders thus request a more active and forceful EU role: the Georgian government would like EU diplomats to apply pressure on Russia to make some concessions at the table (such as granting access for EU monitors to the conflict zones), while Abkhazians seem to complain that "the EU never goes beyond statements of its readiness to assist the Georgian-Abkhaz negotiation process" (Mikhelidze 2012, 13).

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11 See "Remarks by President Donald Tusk following his meeting with Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili", online at: www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/president/news/meeting-with-prime-minister-of-georgia,-1-december-2016/

☰ Indirect mediation through Member States

EU Member States (MSs) represent the constitutional bedrock of the EU; they are represented in the European Council and the Council of the EU, two institutions which have become more prominent since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008. While the importance of the rotating EU presidency to the EU's foreign policy has lessened with the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 – the permanent President of the European Council (together with the HR/VP) have taken over most of these responsibilities – the meetings of the European Council have become more frequent, and their agenda has expanded (Wessels 2015). If one considers the MSs as belonging to the EU institutional structure, their MTD involvement should be envisaged as a tool of European engagement. This is especially the case when the Council grants a negotiation or mediation mandate, explicit or implicit, to its MSs or when it supports their efforts through negative or positive bargaining leverage. The Ukrainian case demonstrates the EU's capacity for working coherently on the horizontal axis of a 'whole-of-society' MTD between various actors and across policy domains in order to leverage its mediation power through negative incentives.

In the **Ukraine** peace process, following failed facilitation attempts by the EU HR/VP (as reviewed earlier), EUMS France and Germany took over the role of mediators under the Normandy Format, while the Council of the EU offered them a political mandate, provided technical expertise to the process, and decided on the red lines for the mediation process (Litra et al. 2017, 22). The EU itself is not represented directly at the table, since the Normandy Format was established at a time when all EU key institutions (European Parliament, EU Commission and HR/VP) were undergoing a change of leadership, and the new HR/VP was judged as too inexperienced and too conciliatory towards Russia to play any decisive role in the negotiations (ibid., 23). According to HR/VP Morgherini (2015), however, Germany and France represent the European positions at the negotiation table. Since neither of these countries nor the EU can be considered as neutral parties to the conflict, which erupted precisely over the prospects of an Association Agreement between Ukraine and EU as a first step towards EU integration, they might be described as interested or biased muscled mediators – or in fact, some might argue, as conflict parties. The EU has been unwavering in its support for Ukrainian territorial integrity and sovereignty, and imposed three rounds of sanctions against Russia for its illegal annexation of Crimea and for fuelling the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, combining diplomatic sanctions – e.g. by excluding Russia from international meetings such as the G8 – and asset freezes, visa bans, and economic sanctions. These sanctions were at first independent of any mediation efforts but were employed as a tool for de-escalation to raise the costs of sustaining or escalating the conflict any further for both Russia and the separatists. After the Minsk II agreement was signed in February 2015, the European Council in its Conclusions of 19-20 March 2015 linked the lifting of sanctions to the accord's successful implementation. As this was planned to be accomplished by the end of 2015, the sanctions have been prolonged three times since (EEAS 2016c). The formal involvement of the Council of the EU in endorsing these sanctions, by demonstrating the support of MS Heads of State and Government, increased their political clout and diplomatic impact. As the various EU MSs hold conflicting diplomatic standpoints with regards to Russia and the conflict in Ukraine, managing a common position on (maintaining) sanctions is no small feat. The EU HR/VP as chair of the Foreign Affairs Council is leading the process of keeping the MSs in line – a vital point for any EU foreign engagement. According to the case study authors, given the lack of common positions over Russia and the Ukraine conflict within EUMS, indirect EU involvement through its two most powerful members represents an advantage, as it allows for a more coherent, efficient and credible decision-making process, and allows the EU to position itself as a broker by acting outside of the main negotiation format (Litra et al. 2017, 28).

≡ EU support to other international mediators

In countries outside the European sphere of influence – where geopolitical interests are weaker and the potential impact of conflicts for EU security is less direct – the EU does not play a leading MTD role but rather supports mediation efforts by other multinational actors through joint diplomatic initiatives, as illustrated by the cases of Mali and Yemen.

In **Mali**, Algeria took the lead in mediating a peaceful settlement between the government and two coalitions of armed groups from July 2014 to May 2015 resulting in an Accord for Peace and Reconciliation. Algerian diplomats invited a number of African states and international organisations to witness and/or support the negotiations, including the United Nations (through its mission MINUSMA), the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and the European Union. The latter had a double presence in Algiers, acting politically as lead mediator through the EUSR in Sahel, and through the EUD providing technical expertise on issues of particular EU interest, such as development and defence. EU officials and EUMS sought to coordinate their MTD efforts by holding weekly meetings in Bamako with chiefs of mission, both on the diplomacy and development cooperation side. These frequent meetings ensured a coherent approach to mediation support by all EUMS.[12] Although France played a leading role both militarily and diplomatically, its bilateral intervention was conducted independently of the EU. Nevertheless, the case study authors assert that the EU had to "suffer the omnipresence and omnipotence of France, which manages to place its cadres in decision-making positions and to ensure the adherence of the EU" (Dijré et al. 2016, 35). They cite the fact that the EUSR Reveyrand-De Menthon was a former French Ambassador to Mali to highlight the difficult separation of EU and French positions and interests. This interpretation is contested by three (former) EEAS officials interviewed for this report, who all assert that French intervention and the role of EU institutions were effectively kept quite distinct in order to preserve the EU's autonomy of action.

In **Yemen,** the GCC Agreement[13] was brokered with President Saleh in November 2011 to resolve the crisis born out of Yemen's Arab Spring through a two-year transition process culminating in a national dialogue and a new Constitution. This accord was made possible by the high level of coordination and cooperation by the EU and its international partners. The Group of Friends of Yemen leveraged significant power through the combined pressure of its members, including the prospect of targeted sanctions (in the form of an assets freeze) by the UN Security Council as well as some EU Member States (Eshaq and al-Marani 2017). The first Head of the EU Delegation (HoD) in Yemen Michele Cervone d'Urso (2009-2012) also played a prominent role in securing the conclusion of the GCC Initiative. The "activist diplomacy (...) of Mr. Cervone was critical towards marshalling a coherent EU response to the crisis, aided by key member-state ambassadors such as those from the UK, Germany and France" (Burke 2013, 3). During the implementation of the transition phase, the EU formed part of the G10, consisting of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, four of the six GCC member states (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Oman), and the EU who acted as sponsors and guardians of the GCC. The case of Yemen demonstrates that under the lead of the HoD, and in the absence of an outstanding role by any EUMS, the EU managed to portray itself as a coherent and impartial diplomatic actor, and acted jointly with other international actors by maintaining a unified position, at least until the outbreak of violence in 2015 (Eshaq/al-Marani 2017, 39). More recently, EU diplomacy has been progressively sidelined by the UN Special Advisors (Eshaq/al-Marani 2017, 17). The effectiveness of EU MTD efforts was likely affected by its lack of presence on the ground after the evacuation of all EUD and MS embassy staff. The EU's perceived neutrality on the ground was also seriously affected by

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12   Skype interviews with two former EU Delegation staff, May 2017.
13   Officially, the "Agreement on the implementation mechanism for the transition process in Yemen in accordance with the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)".

the proactive role of some EUMS (especially the United Kingdom) in supporting Saudi Arabia-led airstrikes since 2015, as assessed by some stakeholders (most prominently Houthi respondents) interviewed for the case study report (Eshaq/al-Marani 2017).

EU funding instruments have also contributed to enhancing international cooperation with other mediating bodies by contributing financially to their MTD efforts. In particular, the EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) has been supporting official peace processes by sponsoring the MINUSMA in **Mali**, the Trust Fund established by the G10 to support the National Dialogue Conference in **Yemen**, and the OSCE in **Ukraine**. For instance, the IcSP has contributed €25 million to the OSCE Monitoring Mission in Ukraine to support (among other activities) high-level diplomacy and multilateral dialogue between the government in Kyiv and representatives of communities affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine (EEAS 2016b).

≡　Promoting peace processes through public diplomacy

Finally, the EU's 'soft power' – embodied by its persuasive appeal and stated commitment to certain normative principles, such as peace, human rights and democracy (Nielsen 2013) – can also be deployed at the service of Track I power-based diplomacy through official public statements to support conflict resolution in third countries. This is commonly done through official statements by top EU diplomats and policy-makers. In Yemen, for instance, the EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton publicly called on all stakeholders to engage positively during the 2013-2014 National Dialogue Conference; Ashton later reaffirmed EU support for the Yemeni people in their work for a more secure and inclusive future.[14] In the case of Mali, the EU Council as well as the HR/VP and the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development publicly praised the 2015 Algiers Agreement.[15] The European Parliament has also made use of its representative power to raise international attention on external conflicts and crises and to encourage their resolution. For instance, in early 2016, it adopted a Resolution on Yemen expressing its concern about the humanitarian situation and breach of international humanitarian law, and calling on the HR/VP to launch an initiative for an EU Arms Embargo and for all conflict stakeholders to start a new round of UN-led negotiations.[16]

At the bilateral level, official political dialogue with partner countries also represents a source of leverage for EU diplomats to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding. For example, since 2004 the EU has held an annual political dialogue with Yemen on issues around democratisation, human rights and combatting terrorism. It also has an established multi-layer political dialogue channel with Russia, which involves the EEAS, the EU Political and Security Committee, and EU parliamentarians. However, such channels tend to become dysfunctional in times of heightened tension, and since the Ukraine crisis most dialogue tracks with Russia have been suspended by the EU as part of its overall policy of exerting political pressure on Russia.[17]

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14 Statement by EU HR/VP Ashton following the launch of the Yemen National Dialogue, 18.03.2013, online at: http://eu-un. europa.eu/statement-by-eu-hr-ashton-following-the-launch-of-the-yemen-national-dialogue/. Statement by EU HR/VP Ashton on the closing of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference, 27.01.2014, online at: http://eu-un.europa.eu/statement-by-eu-hr-ashton-on-the-closing-of-yemens-national-dialogue-conference/

15 Council Conclusions on Mali, 20.07.2015, online at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/07/20-fac-mali-conclusions/. Statement by the HR/VP Federica Mogherini and EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, on the signature of the Malian Peace agreement, Bruxelles, 20/06/2015, online at: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/norway/3319/statement-by-the-hrvp-federica-mogherini-and-eu-commissioner-for-international-cooperation-and-development-neven-mimica-on-the-signature-of-the-malian-peace-agreement_en

16 European Parliament resolution of 25 February 2016 on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, online at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2016-0066+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

17 See 'Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union', online at: www.russianmission.eu/en/politicaldialogue#sthash.9bPODHuh.dpuf

As seen in this sub-section, power-based diplomacy through muscled mediation efforts or mediation support by officials close to the EU power centre (the HR/VP, Council or Member States) primarily relies on one main asset, namely, the use of positive or negative leverage. Its effectiveness, however, is conditioned by a high level of coordination and coherence among EU members and entities, as well as the political will to maintain a unified position through difficult and often protracted processes. This can be a challenge for an organisation still predominantly influenced by the constantly-evolving preferences of its members, as embodied by the political volatility of the European Council. Substantial negative leverage in the form of economic sanctions, for example, can have a negative impact on MSs, which in turn reduces their willingness to maintain them. In the end, it takes only one MS refusing to maintain a sanctions regime for the whole EU mediation strategy to lose its main traction.

In a similar vein, positive leverage through economic incentives or promises of EU integration for countries in the Eastern neighbourhood (such as Serbia and Kosovo) is highly conditioned by their reliability. Previous instances of stalled EU accession processes (as in Macedonia) led to disenchantment and frustration with the EU among the local population, which in turn lessened the ambition of other EU membership candidates to reform in line with EU demands. Moreover, public statements by EU MS Governments or leading politicians against any further enlargement of the EU in the mid-term future can significantly lessen the incentive offered by EU accession enticements (Schimmelfennig 2015, Bergmann/Niemann 2015).

Finally, despite the fact that the efforts of the EU MTD and its member states were described in most case study reports as being complementary rather than competitive, the dominant and proactive roles of France in Mali, and Germany and France in Ukraine show that there are clear overlaps between EU and Member State-level diplomacy when it comes to formal mediation attempts.

3.2.2 Confidence and capacity-building by EU representatives in-country

On a less visible level, EU MTD efforts at the Track 1.5 and II levels of engagement are more focused on concrete problem-solving and relationship-building, with the aim of fostering both confidence and capacity by key conflict stakeholders in order to create the conditions for effective and sustainable peace processes. Such initiatives range from early informal 'talks about talks' to post-agreement negotiations when the challenges of implementation arise. They may thus precede, support and/or follow Track I diplomacy. Such initiatives are primarily led by EU representatives in-country, such as EUSRs, field missions or permanent geographic representations (EU Delegations). In contrast to muscled mediation, the effectiveness of EU unofficial facilitators relies less on their leverage and power than on their ability to build confidence by being seen as credible and impartial actors, and demonstrating thematic or geographic expertise and extensive local outreach. Often this form of third-party engagement is also more flexible and adaptable to the dynamics on the ground than the more formal Track I level.

The credibility of EU field representatives partly relies on their soft power or non-coercive leverage, by making use of EU long-term humanitarian and/or development engagement to demonstrate their purchase and legitimacy as peace mediators. For example, in **Yemen** the EU is seen as a "credible humanitarian and development actor with a long-term experience of engaging in conflict regions", which was "critical to its credibility in supporting the more political peace process" (Sherriff et al. 2013, 31). According to another analyst, the EU's track record and perceived neutrality (in comparison with other donors and EU Member States) provides a "clear comparative advantage in support for human rights" (Durac 2010, 661).

≡   **Dialogue facilitation**

In two case studies, **EU Special Representatives** have been mandated to assist international mediation efforts: the EUSR for the Sahel and EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia. They are classified

here as Track 1.5 facilitators since only a few EUSRs have been clearly mandated to "mediate" (Davis 2014). Nevertheless, they "provide a direct communications channel and can act as mediators and facilitators with actors with whom the EU cannot deal through official channels" (MediatEUr 2012: 3). Several EUSRs have actually benefited from constructive ambiguity in the formulation of their mandate (MediatEUr 2012), as it has provided them with considerable leeway in the conduct of their diplomatic activities, including the facilitation of formal and informal dialogue encounters. In some contexts, such as Kosovo, the functions of EUSR and Head of EU Delegation are performed by a single official in order to support a coherent EU presence on the ground.

In **Georgia,** the position of EUSR was established in 2008 as a means to prepare international talks and increase the visibility of the EU's role in the peace process (Davis 2014). The current office holder has a broader mandate, namely to "contribute to a peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region, including the crisis in Georgia and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict", notably by co-chairing (alongside the OSCE and UN) the Geneva International Discussions (GID) on the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia (Council of the EU 2014). The current EUSR Herbert Salber is seen as particularly proactive in leading the GID by "acting as a facilitative mediator transmitting the messages among the sides" (Masharashvili et al. 2016, 34). Salber combines an official representation role – co-convening the GID (organized around two working groups on security and humanitarian issues) – with a more informal mandate to engage in confidence-building activities with the political opposition and civil society groups in the whole region.[18] Earlier analyses (EPLO 2013, Davis 2014) noted that the profusion of EU actors with overlapping roles and mandates (including at some point two EUSRs, one for the South Caucasus and one for the crisis in Georgia, in addition to the EU Delegation and the EU Monitoring Mission - EUMM) has created some confusion on the ground and thus undermined the coherence and effectiveness of the EU's mediation capacity. Thanks to the personalities of the respective players, and the pragmatic need from the EU Delegation and EUMM to cooperate with the EUSR team that has sole access to the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, relations between these various actors seem to have improved of late.[19]

In **Mali**, the EU Special Representative for the Sahel was the leading EU representative in the mediation team during the Algiers peace process; however, he is also mandated to facilitate dialogue behind the scenes by "engag[ing] with all relevant stakeholders of the region, governments, [and] regional organisations" (Art. 3,1b) to "contribute to regional and international efforts to facilitate the resolution of the crisis in Mali, in particular a full return to constitutional normality and governance throughout the territory and a credible national inclusive dialogue leading to a sustainable political settlement" (Art. 3.1h). The SR is also co-chairing the committee on economic, social and cultural development in the Algiers Agreement's Monitoring Committee (CSA) (Djiré et al. 2017) and thus helps to facilitate inter-party bargaining over the implementation of the peace accord.

The personnel involved in the **CSDP missions**, such as the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali), have continuous working relationships with government officials and representatives from civil society, and thus have the potential to support multi-track mediation efforts (Gourlay 2010).

In **Georgia,** the EUMM Mission staff is facilitating a dialogue format within the frame of the 'Incidence Prevention and Response Mechanisms' (IPRMs). In this context, the EUMM hosts meetings to discuss the security situation at the border between South Ossetia and Abkhazia with Georgia, that are attended by relevant authorities from all parties, in order to build multi-party confidence and mitigate future security

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18   Interview with a political advisor of the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, Brussels, 21 March 2017.
19   Interview with a political advisor of the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, Brussels, 21 March 2017.

clashes. Hence, the EUMM has effectively been engaged in dispute resolution (Sherriff et al. 2013, Davis 2014). As part of the IPRMs, the EUMM also facilitates a hotline telephone system that has been effective for dealing with human security issues, information-sharing and de-escalation. However, the implementation of these activities has been impeded by several obstacles such as a lack of trust in the EU as an impartial broker among the de facto authorities of the contested territories, as well as a lack of access by EUMM to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In several contexts, **EU Delegations** also play a pivotal role in facilitating inter-party dialogue by offering an independent and neutral space where stakeholders can meet and explore their respective positions and interests in a confident atmosphere.

In **Yemen**, until the 2015 crisis, EU in-country delegates had been "facilitating events and meetings of the conflict parties at the Delegation facilities in Sana'a, which they understood as opportunities to listen and to understand their views and demands. In so doing, they offered an informal setting for discussion…These events did not act upon a formal mandate but helped to establish communication between the disputants, which can be situated in the realm of dialogue" (Girke 2015, 9). This facilitation role was aided not only by the proactiveness of the successive Heads of Delegation, as already highlighted earlier, but also by the positive image of the EUD among all Yemeni stakeholders, who viewed it as an impartial third-party which was "not biased in terms of its history and relations with Yemen and had the reputation of being a strong supporter of democracy" (Girke 2015, 10). Since the beginning of the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen in March 2015, the EUD operating from Brussels has engaged in "low-key diplomacy in trying to reach out to some of the conflict parties, most importantly the Houthis, building upon dialogue channels that had been established earlier on in the transition process" (Eshaq/El-Marani 2017, 31). Some case study respondents felt, however, that in their attempts to maintain a neutral position, EU officials (both EUD staff and EUMS ambassadors) have been too hesitant to impose any pressure against those hampering the political transition, and have looked for solutions that would "please conflicting local and regional power centres instead of what served the best interests of the majority of the Yemeni people" (ibid., 40).

≡   **Dialogue and negotiation support**

Supporting dialogue activities at the Track 1.5 and II levels requires in-depth knowledge of the conflict, the key actors and the power relations at play, in order to engage with all relevant and concerned stakeholders who can channel dialogue outcomes towards national elites and also act as representatives of broad societal interests. Where the EU staff in-country do not have the necessary knowledge, staff or outreach capacity to engage in informal dialogue facilitation, technical assistance through financial instruments, EEAS experts or external consultants all represent additional forms of indirect mediation support for conflict parties, other external third parties, insider mediators and the broader population.

The EEAS Mediation Support Team (MST) is specifically mandated to provide technical dialogue support to EU staff in conflict areas, as well as to the conflict stakeholders themselves. Thematically, it has commissioned and published several factsheets on salient mediation-related challenges (e.g. transitional justice in the context of peace mediation, national dialogue platforms and infrastructures for peace, engaging with non-state armed groups, supporting women's participation and gender in mediation processes). The team also has a gender focal point that provides specific expertise to EUDs, either directly or through gender experts listed on the MST roster (Urrutia et al. 2016). With regards to the five countries under scrutiny, the MST also regularly deploys its own staff as well as external experts to support EUDs and EUSRs in their MTD missions, through coaching, training and knowledge management (EEAS 2014).[20]

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20   External experts are provided through the European Resources for Mediation Support (ERMES) scheme funded by the IcSP and

For instance, according to the EEAS factsheet on the MST, experts were deployed to **Mali** to help "define EU options for support to the dialogue and reconciliation process in the post-crisis context and to conduct an expert workshop with the Commission on Reconciliation and Dialogue" (ibid, 1). Furthermore, in **Ukraine**, experts dispatched by the team have "provide[d] support to the Ukrainian authorities on national dialogue and inclusive reform processes" (ibid). In **Yemen,** the MST provided mediation training to relevant EU Delegation officials and carried out a scoping mission with all relevant Yemeni actors involved in the National Dialogue Conference (Girke 2015, 10). It also organised a capacity building workshop for members of the Yemeni delegation participating in the UN-brokered round of negotiations in Kuwait in mid-2016 (Eshaq/Al-Marani 2017, 31). Interviews with (former) EUD and EUSR teams in Mali and Georgia, revealed that there was a high level of appreciation for the technical and methodological expertise provided by the MST on specific issues of particular relevance (such as power-sharing, identity recognition mechanisms, or multi-track linkages) in the respective peace processes; however, this support often came too late and was sometimes inappropriate as the deployed experts or commissioned reports were disconnected from the reality and needs on the ground at the time.[21]

In conclusion to Section 3.2, evidence from the five case studies under scrutiny indicates that the EU's track record on MTD engagement displays a large variance. While there is no uniform or dominant model for the EU's approach to mediation and dialogue support, some general trends can nevertheless be identified. While actors closer to the centre of power in Brussels or the EU capitals, such as the HR/VP or EUMS, are more likely to be at the forefront of power-based mediation efforts (in a leading or supportive role), and to rely on positive or negative leverage as the main asset for effective MTD, in-country EU actors such as EUDs, EUSRs and CSDP mission staff are more likely to engage or support more informal Track 1.5 or Track II dialogue with key influencers, and to rely on key assets such as their expertise, perceived impartiality, long-term presence and local outreach.

In cases where the EU Delegation effectively centralised these various efforts by providing a single contact point for local stakeholders and international partners, as in Yemen, the EU was seen as acting coherently and in a coordinated fashion. Elsewhere, the capacities for horizontal coherence and integration appear to show mixed results. On the positive side, the EU has displayed strong coherence despite divided positions among its MSs in Kosovo, by leveraging positive incentives in support of mediation, and in Ukraine, by agreeing to the use of sanctions against Russia and conditioning these to the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Yet these sanctions have so far failed to deter Russia from meddling in Ukrainian internal affairs by annexing Crimea and supporting separatists in the Eastern Provinces. This example shows that when MTD efforts are counterbalanced by powerful neighbours (such as Russia in Georgia and Ukraine), the EU is lacks the necessary carrots and sticks to create leverage with the conflict parties.

Overall, there still seems to be significant scope for improving EU internal cross-sectorial cooperation in conflict-affected regions, in order to ensure that long-term political and economic relations are leveraged for effective MTD, and that seemingly contradictory policies between EU institutions and MSs (e.g. dialogue support vs. military efforts and counter-terrorism in Mali and Yemen) are not working at cross-purposes. On the other hand, the provision of technical support for mediation and dialogue by the EEAS Mediation Support Team, either directly or through external consultants, towards both the Brussels-based and in-country EU staff, indicates that there are ongoing attempts to mainstream dialogue and mediation expertise within EU institutions; these efforts are conducive to a horizontally integrated approach to MTD.

Finally, inter-agency coordination with other supra-national organisations, from the UN to the GCC or the OSCE, seems to work relatively well, with the effect that the EU's approach to peace support is rarely distinguished from that of its partners – for instance in Mali (Djiré et al. 2017).

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run by a consortium of European NGOs, which supports the work of the EEAS Mediation Support Team by providing technical assistance to conflict parties and mediators engaged in peace processes around the world.

21   Interviews in Brussels and via phone, March-May 2017.

3.3 Vertical inclusivity and multi-track coordination

After analysing EU capabilities for temporal proactiveness and horizontal coherence in mediation and dialogue support, this section now turns to the third component of a whole-of-society approach to MTD, namely the capacity to support inclusive engagement across societal tracks. Inclusion is defined by the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation as "the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort" (UN 2012a, 11). In this section, vertical inclusivity will be assessed along two criteria: the participation of non-state actors (including civil society and 'difficult actors' such as non-state armed groups or non-recognised states) in official top-down peace processes (3.3.1), and the promotion of bottom-up community dialogue as a complement to Track 1 (or Track 1.5) mediation and dialogue efforts (3.3.2).

3.3.1 Top-down peace processes

≡   **From exclusionary elite bargains...**

As reviewed earlier through the prism of muscled Track I mediation, in three out of the five case studies, the EU is supporting elite-driven peace processes that fail to include broader segments of society, either directly through participation at the negotiation table or indirectly through binding consultation channels or public information-sharing. Given the EU's power and leverage to influence the designs of these peace processes, it is missing an important opportunity to engage relevant constituencies that are nevertheless crucial stakeholders in inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding.

In **Ukraine**, the so-called 'Normandy Format' negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany involve government officials from these four countries exclusively, and take place behind closed doors. There are no mechanisms for public communication on the contents of the talks, or any formal platforms for the inclusion of civil society organisations (EPLO 2017). This format clearly prioritises the efficiency of decision-making over accountability through inclusive participation in the process. Whether such an elitist process can lead to efficient outcomes ought to be questioned; however, as noted by one mediation expert: "in-country exclusion, international insistence on the secrecy of the talks, and an overall resistance to multi-track dialogues has contributed to a dead-lock in the official talks" (Cristescu 2017, 3). The same expert also argues that the sentiment shared by most Ukrainians that their views are not taken into account in the negotiation process, contributes to the lack of public and political support for dialogue and reconciliation with Eastern Ukrainian separatists (ibid, 6). The high level of polarisation among the general public, and the exclusion of members of the Parliament from the Normandy Format, has blocked progress on the substantive elements of the peace process. Indeed, the Minsk II agreement has so far only resulted in an unstable ceasefire, while the transformative components of the deal (e.g. constitutional reform) aimed at addressing the demands of the separatists could not be passed in Parliament and are yet to be implemented (Litra et al. 2016, Cristescu 2017).

In **Kosovo,** a shortcoming of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue process is the exclusion of representatives from the Serbian population from north Kosovo and Kosovo-Albanians from south Serbia. Although both states claim to represent their respective constituencies, those most affected by the decisions taken in the dialogue have no direct input into the process (Van der Borgh 2016 et al.). In this regard the inclusion of relevant conflict stakeholders and conflict-affected constituencies by the EU as lead mediator, as promoted under a whole-of-society approach to MTD embodied in the 2009 Concept, is lacking.

In **Georgia,** the Geneva International Discussions are also described by the case study authors as an elite-only process: "No information is available on the issues presented during the meetings, the points made by different participants and the results of the talks" (Macharashvili et al. 2017, 32). The opaqueness of the negotiation format and the lack of transparency thus prevents Georgian civil society from monitoring the talks. Moreover, the GID format is dominated by men and pays little attention to gender aspects (ibid., 44). A member of the EUSR team in Georgia asserts that the EU as co-convener of the GID has attempted various approaches to include civil society voices from all sides into the political and security dialogue process, including holding information sessions with Georgian civil society organisations (CSOs) the day prior to every GID session, and collecting their thematic proposals, or proposing parallel meetings between Georgian officials and Abkhazian CSOs as indirect representatives of the non-recognised authorities.[22] However, such parallel consultation spaces remain disconnected from the official negotiation arena and have very limited influence (if any at all) on the GID.

≡   … to engagement with 'difficult actors'…

Beyond state officials and incumbent political or military elites, the inclusion of informal elites or powerful actors who have high stakes in the conflict and can become peace 'spoilers' is essential to effective peace processes (Dudouet/Lundström 2016, Van Veen/Dudouet 2017). The EU has gained experience in engaging 'difficult actors' – such as leaders of breakaway regions, 'extremists', or non-state armed groups – to support their inclusion in peace processes (ECDPM 2012), especially in Yemen and Mali. While the official standpoint of the EU in these countries is to support territorial integrity and national unity, this pro-state bias does not seem to hinder such engagement and the perception of impartiality by most conflict parties.

In **Yemen**, the EU Delegation has maintained regular contact with two 'radical' non-state actors, the Houthis and the Southern Movement, whenever the implementation of the GCC Agreement has become deadlocked. After the Saudi-led military intervention began in 2015, the EU Delegation initially provided the only communication channel with the Houthis. It conducted "low-key diplomacy in trying to reach out to some of the conflict parties, most importantly the Houthis, building upon dialogue channels that had been established earlier on" (Eshaq/Al-Marani 2017, 31).

In **Mali**, EU mediators have held direct encounters with the two coalitions of armed groups present in the Algiers negotiations – separatist groups as well as pro-state militias – but have strongly opposed dialogue with 'non-compliant' or 'terrorist' armed groups represented by radical Islamist jihadi groups. According to the authors of the case study, the EU was perceived as a fairly neutral co-mediator, albeit to differing degrees, by the primary conflict parties (Djiré et al. 2017, 29). However, the Coalition of Movements of Azawad (CMA) have complained about some "veiled threats" by the EU Chief Mediator (EUSR) who sought to convince them that their refusal to sign the peace accord would benefit terrorist groups (ibid, 30). In fact, in a form of discreet behind-closed-door leveraging, EU officials have admitted to the use of targeted sanctions as well as discreet offers of positions, money or offers of exile for leading members of the armed opposition in order to accelerate the negotiation process (Crisis Group 2014). Since the signing of the peace accord, however, the EU is taking an even-handed approach by promoting equal participation by state and (armed) opposition representatives in the various implementation commissions, as stipulated in the Algiers agreement.

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22   Interview in Brussels, 21 March 2017.

EU engagement in its Eastern neighbourhood offers a contrasting picture with regards to the readiness of EU officials to include state challengers in dialogue and negotiation processes. As mentioned earlier (see Section 3.2.1), in the South Caucasus, the long-standing EU policy of 'engagement without recognition' with the de-facto authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have fuelled perceptions of strong EU bias by these stakeholders. Meanwhile, there are no direct channels of communication between the EU and the communities in the Donbass Republic in Eastern Ukraine, who are only engaged through their alleged Russian 'patrons'.

In **Ukraine**, the main challengers of state authority, namely the Eastern Ukrainian separatists, are not represented in the Normandy Format. According to EEAS staff, the lack of EU contact with these actors is justified by their lack of formal legitimacy in the absence of any credible and verifiable local elections to confirm their alleged representativeness.[23] The self-proclaimed authorities in the Russia-backed regions also deny Ukrainian authorities access to their territory. The only contact between representatives of the government and the separatist regions are provided by their common participation in the Trilateral Contact Group (TCG) – alongside representatives from the OSCE, Ukraine and Russia. This format consists of bi-weekly consultation meetings on political, security, economic and humanitarian issues. However, the lack of sustained direct engagement with actors and communities in the east beyond the superficial communication facilitated by the TCG format has resulted in a major deficit in understanding of the real situation in the non-governmental controlled areas. This analytical gap, in turn, has prevented Ukrainian authorities from considering a broader range of soft-power engagement options beyond military offensives and anti-terrorist operations (Cristescu 2017, 9).

≡   **... and support for civil society participation**

Although the EU 2009 Concept does not mention this specific form of support to peace(building) processes, **negotiation support** is a strategy for empowering disadvantaged or excluded parties in order to foster more sustainable political settlements and to prevent the appearance of peace 'spoilers' in the post-conflict phase. CSOs, especially youth and women's organisations, have been the target of such negotiation support through capacity building and advocacy. Initiatives to promote the inclusion of women in formal and informal peace processes have received the support of both the EEAS and EUMS (Urrutia et al. 2016). These initiatives are relevant, as several of the experiences demonstrate that for women's inclusion in peace processes to take place, internal and external support (including by third parties and international stakeholders) is crucial (Urrutia et al. 2016). Yemen (and to some extent Mali) represents a prominent example of EU efforts to support the empowerment and recognition of marginalised actors in negotiations through technical and financial assistance.

In **Yemen**, the EU has provided technical, political and financial support to the inclusive process of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and conducted specific outreach activities towards civil society participants, with special attention being given to youth and women's organisations, to support their active participation and to encourage them to adopt a common negotiation position (Eshaq/Al-Marani 2017). The EU (HoD and Head of Political Section, as well as the various MSs) significantly supported the inclusion of women into the National Dialogue process, which was an important factor in raising the quota of 30% female participation in the NDC (Urrutia et al. 2016, 5). However, local respondents quoted in the case study report criticised the process for selecting civil society participants, asserting that despite the encouraging number of female and youth (20%) representatives, the NDC was still dominated by the old political establishment with no real outreach to other components of society (Eshaq/El-Marani 2017, 34-53).

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23   Interview with Ukraine desk officers at EEAS, Brussels, 21 March 2017.

In **Mali,** the EU Delegation undertook special efforts to make civil society voices, especially those of women and youth, heard during the peace negotiations by supporting their participation in the Algiers peace process (Djiré et al. 2017). The role of Malian civil society in Algiers has been ambivalently assessed; although CSO representatives were included in the early negotiation phase, they left before the serious negotiations began (Crisis Group 2014). Each conflict party was also encouraged to invite (and possibly co-opt) their 'own' civil society delegates, which seriously affected the legitimacy and representativeness of those representatives (Djiré et al. 2017, 32). Although the EUD made women's participation one of its priorities, and in spite of strong support from the UN, it did not manage to overcome the reservations of Algeria and other mediators (O'Reilly et al. 2015). Former EUD staff also stressed the fact that the EU did not have any significant influence on the negotiation format and merely supported the UN mission in its efforts to promote and fund civil society participation in the Algiers process. Moreover, given the reservations of all parties on the real representativeness of these actors, there was a strong consensus that an excessive level of participation at the table would have been detrimental to the efficiency of the process. Additionally, the EUD saw its role as ensuring that the contents of the agreement were sufficiently sensitive to the needs of women, youths and other sectors of society. Finally, it invited local as well as international NGOs to attend the weekly coordination meetings held with EUMS in Bamako, and pressured the Malian government to organise regular consultation and information meetings with civil society.[24] Overall, the assessment shows that "although the peace negotiations only allowed for limited participation of non-state actors, the EU contributed to facilitate significant engagement with non-state actors around the peace process" (Djiré et al. 2017, 56).

3.3.2 Bottom-up dialogue and reconciliation

This final sub-section assesses the EU's capacity to engage in transformative mediation by supporting the empowerment and recognition of a broad variety of actors in conflict societies, and by encouraging interaction and understanding between and within communities. The EU is not directly involved in facilitating dialogue on these levels (Tracks II and III), but instead supports local and international dialogue initiatives through its funding instruments, especially the IcSP (known as the Instrument for Stability (IfS) until 2014). The IcSP funding under Article 3 (which covers most of the budget) specifically targets "the provision of technical and logistical assistance for the efforts undertaken by international and regional organisations and by State and civil society actors in promoting confidence-building, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation" (Council of the European Union and the European Parliament 2014, Article 3(2)). The Georgia case study report (Macharashvili et al. 2017) offers a thorough assessment of a major dialogue programme funded by this instrument, while other examples from the cases of Mali and Yemen are briefly cited.

In **Georgia,** the IcSP (and previously the IfS) has been funding the project 'Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM)' since 2010 in three project cycles. Although the EU has been the primary donor, the implementing body is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an international agency that is perceived as more neutral than the EU by project recipients and beneficiaries on the ground, especially in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Macharashvili et al. 2017, 46). The aim of the project is to "stimulate people-to-people contacts across conflict divides, and to generate increased capacities within communities as well as CSOs to mediate political differences in constructive ways" (ibid. 35). COBERM has been the only mechanism to successfully engage with civil society across de facto Georgian divisions, both at the intra-community level and at the inter-community level (UN 2012b). Among its several achievements so far, this programme has generated a network of professionals located on both sides of the conflict,

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24 Interviews with EEAS staff and former EUD staff, March-May 2017.

whereby journalists, academics and researchers are engaged in informal confidence-building dialogue on issues of common concern. Considering the lack of progress on the official Track I level (as reviewed earlier in Section 3.2.1), such activities have the potential to initiate "bottom-up" dynamics that could benefit the EU-mediated negotiations, even though no direct transfer of learning and knowledge between COBERM and the GID has been recorded so far. The limitations of the COBERM project as identified by its participants will be reviewed below.

In **Mali,** EU peacebuilding support initially started from the bottom-up, with the funding of several (intra- or inter-) community dialogue projects through the IcSP prior to its Track I mediation engagement during the Algiers peace process. In fact, the months that followed the 2012 crisis saw a multiplication of dialogue projects funded by various international donors with no clear coordination between them.[25] The most noteworthy initiatives funded by the IcSP include a participatory action research project conducted across the country by Interpeace and the Malian Institute of Research and Action for Peace (IMRAP), which aimed to identify obstacles and priorities for peace.[26] The EU also funds a radio show that aims to support peace and reconciliation by supporting inter-community dialogue and professionalising the media sector through a media platform built by a network of qualified journalists.[27] Such grassroots activities ought to be better connected with the official Track I peacebuilding process in order to inform ongoing EU efforts to support the implementation of the Algiers accord, by providing knowledge on public perceptions around peace, security and development, and by serving as connectors between Malian society and their (alleged) political representatives.

In **Yemen**, running in parallel to its support for the National Dialogue Conference in 2013-14, the EU – through the IcSP – sponsored local dialogues at the governorate level to support the political participation of Yemeni citizens and the main stakeholders (e.g. political parties, women, youth, civil society and businesses), which were carried out by the Yemeni NGO Political Development Forum and the German Berghof Foundation.[28] The EU has also supported various dialogue platforms for civil society representatives, for example by sponsoring a trust-building conference in Cyprus in October 2015 that brought together Yemeni women from different political and social backgrounds (Eshaq/Al-Marani 2017, 31).

While they are not mentioned in the case study reports, other EU funding instruments are well suited to supporting MTD efforts. For example, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is "a soft policy instrument, non-prescriptive, grassroots and focused on social development" (Marchetti/Tocci 2011, 189) that is intended to support "measures to facilitate peaceful conciliation between segments of societies, including support for confidence-building measures relating to human rights and democratisation" (EIDHR Article 2 (1)). Funding has been provided to European peacebuilding NGOs to support grassroots dialogue and capacity-building for peace in conflict-affected regions; these efforts include building youth capacity to contribute to peacebuilding in **Yemen**, and by supporting civil society reconciliation initiatives in **Georgia** and the surrounding region, such as the 'South Caucasus Mediation and Dialogue Initiative for Reignited Peace' by Interpeace, and the project 'Strengthening Women's Capacity for Peacebuilding in the South Caucasus Region' carried out by CARE Austria (EU Delegation to Georgia 2011).

Beyond IcSP and EIDHR, the EU is funding a project in Georgia entitled "Strengthening the Capacity of the Peacebuilding Sector in the South Caucasus" via the Non-State-Actors-and-Local Authorities

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25 Skype interview with former EUD staff in Bamako, 19 May 2017.
26 See online at: www.interpeace.org/programme/mali/
27 See online at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/studio-tamani-linformation-de-reference-et-durable-pour-le-dialogue-et-la-paix-au-mali_fr
28 See online at: www.pdf-yemen.com/index.php/en/our-program/current-projects/strengthening-public-participation-local-dialogues

instrument,[29] and in **Mali** the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is funding a programme to support peace through economic regeneration and assistance for local authorities which includes inclusive dialogue between opposing communities to re-establish a social network and mutual confidence.[30] This form of strategically mainstreaming reconciliation efforts into developmental or humanitarian work is a good example of how internal sectoral coherence can be part of the Comprehensive Approach and the horizontal aspect of a whole-of-society approach.

Despite the encouraging efforts outlined above, Track III approaches funded through EU instruments face a number of common **challenges**. One is the availability of funds allocated for conflict prevention, reconciliation and peacebuilding which can be disbursed rapidly and adapted flexibly to the constantly-evolving conditions on the ground. EU staff members in Brussels or in-country who are responsible for evaluating and approving the allocation of funds also need to have the necessary knowledge about MTD concepts and lessons learnt in order to select those projects that have the most potential for multi-track transfer and dissemination.

On the other hand, CSOs on the ground need to be both willing and capable of conducting effective peacebuilding projects. As the EU application procedures and accounting regulations are quite complex and work-intensive, not all local organisations have the necessary capabilities to apply for and manage EU projects. In **Mali**, "EU support often … came accompanied by cumbersome bureaucracy, complex procedures, incoherence of instruments, and slow implementation" (Djiré et al. 2017, 38). Similar findings are reflected in **Georgia** where "only a limited group of people [are] actually well-prepared and well-informed in order to access COBERM funds", while those who would need the funds the most and who may have the most creative ideas are unable to access the funds because they do not know how to write a convincing project proposal (Macharashvili et al. 2017, 40-41). Strengthening local CSOs is often an inherent component of EU-funded projects but in regions lacking capable and organised CSOs, this represents a daunting task. Although the COBERM scheme aims to benefit Abkhazian and South Ossetian societies equally, only NGOs based in Abkhazia manage to access the funds due to the underdeveloped level of civil society organisation in South Ossetia (Macharashvili et al. 2017).

Another critique that was raised in the case of Georgia but which might be transferrable to other settings is the risk of EU-funded projects being conceived primarily as a 'business model' and as a source of income for NGOs rather than as genuine conflict transformation instruments: "Local experts agree that it is very easy to bring at least twenty people from different sides together under claims of building confidence, while the actual value and the impact of such an effort might not really be consistent" (Macharashvili et al. 2017, 40). In general it is often the case that dialogue activities focus on the same core group of participants who are already interested and willing to engage with the other conflict party, while the real outreach to broader society remains shallow.

Finally, EU support for grassroots-level dialogue and reconciliation work seem to be insufficiently connected to the other tracks of engagement, which can reduce their effectiveness and impact. Beyond the inherent benefits of encouraging interaction and understanding between and within communities, fostering bottom-up dynamics requires coordination between the different MTD tracks. Suitable interlocutors that can systematically and purposefully connect the different actors involved across multiple levels of engagement are rare. The involvement of high-level EU officials in the COBERM project in Georgia represents a welcome exception: the EU Head of Delegation is a member of its steering group, which "is a very unusual arrangement, because very rarely such kind of high-level officials will be involved in programming" of EU-funded Track II and III activities (Macharashvili et al. 2017, 37).

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29 For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/thematic-programme-non-state-actors-and-local-authorities-development_en

30 http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/mali-eutf-securite-18042016_fr.pdf

To sum up this sub-section, the EU displays the capacity to deploy the full range of multi-track approaches to dialogue, mediation and diplomacy, in both top-down and bottom-up directions. There are several constraints on employing Track III options in particular; most importantly, when it comes to the concept of vertical inclusivity, very few attempts have been made so far to strengthen multi-track complementarity and coordination. Where EU actors and instruments are intervening along different tracks simultaneously or sequentially, there seems to be little interaction between these various levels of engagement; this reduces the potential (and misses the opportunity) to maximize their impact. This becomes especially clear in contexts where the EU is involved (directly or indirectly through its MSs) in Track I mediation (Ukraine, Georgia and Kosovo) and thus has more influence to encourage or induce the participation of marginalised groups into the peace process. Significantly, the peace processes where the EU has significant leverage seem to also be those where there is least direct involvement of non-state actors beyond the incumbent elites and primary conflict stakeholders. In these three countries, civil society was either been completely excluded from the mediated negotiations, or only informed and/or consulted through parallel tracks (as in Georgia). By contrast, in countries where the EU was not in the driving seat of the mediation but rather assisted other third-party facilitators through diplomatic and technical support, the official negotiation formats were more inclusive and allowed civil society representatives to participate directly in the talks (albeit with concerns raised about their selection criteria).

EEAS staff members from the mediation support team offered an optimistic outlook on the prospects for mainstreaming an inclusive approach to dialogue and mediation both in Brussels and with EU staff in-country. According to them, the implementation of the 2009 EU Concept on mediation and dialogue has created significant awareness across EU institutions on the importance of multi-track diplomatic engagement and a widespread recognition that inclusive and participatory dialogue formats are essential ingredients for effective and sustainable peace processes. However, judging by the evidence from the five case study contexts explored in this section, there is still a significant gap between the policy expectations for a whole-of-society approach to MTD and the realities on the ground (as synthesised in Table 2 below). The next section provides a succinct list of factors contributing to this discrepancy.

Table 2: Comparative assessment of EU capabilities for whole-of-society MTD

	Ukraine	Georgia	Kosovo	Mali	Yemen
Temporal proactiveness and reactivity	(+) (−)	(−) (+)	(+) (+)	(−) (+/−)	(+) (+)
Horizontal coordination - internally - between MS - internationally	(+) (−) (+)	(+) (−) (+)	(+) (−) (+)	(+) (+) (+)	(+) (+/−) (+)
Vertical inclusivity - 'hard to reach' actors - civil society	(−) (−)	(+) (−)	(−) (−)	(+/−) (+)	(+) (+)

4 Internal and contextual constraints

If EU diplomatic and technical interventions in conflict-affected and fragile contexts demonstrate a real capability to conduct Multi-Track Diplomacy in a whole-of-society fashion, as envisioned by the 2009 Concept and reflected in the 2016 Global Strategy, this capability is often deployed in a non-systematic and seemingly ad-hoc fashion and fails to be fully implemented in most contexts under scrutiny in this report. This section seeks to identify the range of factors contributing to such a discrepancy between the ambitions of the EU as outlined in Section 2 and actual practice. These factors include both contextual (local, national, regional and international) and internal constraints (Whitman/Wolf 2012). Internal constraints arise out of the unique setup of the European Union. To conduct multi-track diplomacy in a proactive, integrated and inclusive fashion requires a complex set of capabilities, ranging from leverage power and policy coherence to technical expertise and in-depth contextual knowledge. External constraints are shaped by EU relations and interactions with other actors, as well as the structural and geopolitical context of intervention. Table 3 below offers a non-exhaustive list of the main **institutional (technical and political) constraints** impeding EU MDT efforts, as identified in the case study reports.

Table 3: EU Internal Constraints

	Constraints	Description
TECHNICAL	**Knowledge is not institutionalised**	Too often EU capabilities are based on the individual skills of key officials, rather than on a collective and systematic capability to act. There is a lack of institutionalised training and awareness-raising on relevant issues pertaining to whole-of-society MTD, such as WHY, WHEN and HOW to involve non-state actors (e.g. women, civil society and marginalised groups) in Track I mediation and dialogue initiatives.
	Overlapping and unclear mandates	A profusion of EU institutions, EUMS and other international actors without any transparent repartition of roles according to each agency's comparative advantage, lessens their impact and credibility.
	Staff rotation	Frequent rotations of HQ and in-country staff reduce the necessary incentive and exposure to accumulate the required political knowledge and local contacts to develop a sophisticated understanding of the local context. The capacity of EU institutions to react and adapt to local dynamics seems particularly low in times of leadership handover.
	Visibility gap	The recipient societies often seem to be unaware of the existing range of EU activities and support options. This is caused by a lack of information-sharing and transparency on EU country strategies, funding policies and ongoing projects, etc.

POLITICAL	**Lack of coherence in MS approaches and policies**	A (perceived) lack of coherence in the respective positions of EU Member States towards conflict parties can impede Track I mediation efforts, and reduce the impact of EU incentives and (threats of) sanctions.
	Challenges to being an honest broker	Divergent policy goals or historical connections between EUMS and partner countries can reduce the EU's credibility as an impartial or non-partisan honest broker.
	Multi-track disconnection	There are no sufficient mechanisms in place, and there is a lack of political guidance, to link and connect EU diplomatic and technical interventions across the different societal tracks, in order to foster top-down and bottom-up synergies.

While internal constraints might be mitigated through well-targeted technical and political measures (see recommendations below), **external constraints** often go beyond what the EU can (or is willing to) influence.

≡ First, the **conflict/geopolitical context** sets the parameters for EU action and conditions the nature and outcomes of MTD efforts. Most obviously, mediation is only possible when the conflicting parties are willing to engage with one another. While the use of positive or negative leverage by the EU can influence the positions of local stakeholders, powerful regional actors (such as Russia in the Eastern neighborhood or Saudi Arabia in Yemen) can impede or block EU mediation and dialogue strategies.

≡ Likewise, **fragmented political settlements** might lower the impact of EU MTD efforts if these solely or primarily target formal state institutions. In many fragile and conflict-affected contexts, the state has limited reach outside of the capital and thus external conflict resolution efforts are unlikely to impact informal and local/regional power brokers (Rogers et al. 2015, Van Veen/Dudouet 2017). Track III initiatives are also often unable to reach those populations that are most in need of reconciliation and dialogue activities: for instance, while the IcSP is funding a UNDP-implemented project aimed at promoting local reconciliation in Ukraine with a focus on the conflict-affected areas, it is unable to access the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk which is not controlled by Ukraine (Litra et al. 2017, 57).

≡ **Cultural differences** can set limitations for EU attempts to support inclusive peace processes. In Mali, international efforts to increase women's and civil society participation in the negotiations were partly ineffective because they went against the normative preferences of the conflict parties and the lead mediator.

≡ **A weak civil society** is a common feature of many conflict-affected or post-war countries, where CSOs tend to be nascent, ill-organised and/or dominated by the same elites that control governance structures. It can be difficult to identify credible, representative and legitimate interlocutors for MTD efforts. In particular, groups that have been marginalised by the conflict may not have well-established systems of legitimate representation in place. As a result, the tendency is often to partner with the 'usual suspects', i.e. Western-born or educated, moderate, middle-class NGO professionals and women's groups.

≡ The **perception of EU bias by the conflict parties** reduces its influence and affects its mediation role. Transforming such perceptions requires a delicate and incremental process of establishing and maintaining a credible and impartial stance towards all parties.

5 Conclusion and recommendations to the EU

In conclusion, the various assets deployed by EU actors and instruments in the pursuit of proactive, integrated and inclusive multi-track diplomacy will be assessed according to the three main levels of EU capabilities as defined by Whitman and Wolff (2012, 11): the capability to act, to fund, and to coordinate and cooperate. Overall, EU capabilities have undoubtedly increased significantly since the Lisbon Treaty, and as far as MTD is concerned, since the introduction of the 2009 EU concept on mediation and dialogue support.

≡ **Capability to act:**

On a technical level, the EU displays a significant capacity to act (and to react to evolving realities on the ground) by mobilising its various institutions and policy domains in pursuit of MTD efforts. A variety of European actors (HR/VP, EUDs, EUSRs, MST, MSs, CSDN missions, etc.) are capable of engaging in mediation and dialogue support across multiple tracks and approaches, from power-based mediation 'with muscles' to impartial third-party dialogue facilitation or capacity-building. The technical constraints outlined above contribute to an uneven degree of engagement, outreach and impact across the five cases explored in this report. The political will to deploy MTD capabilities also conditions their use: EU interventions in Yemen and Mali indicate that there are a number of available options to support and incentivise inclusive peace/transition processes; however, it seems that such options have not been fully mobilised in countries closer to home (Kosovo, Ukraine and Georgia) where paradoxically EU actors or Member States have more political leverage, but where negotiations remain limited to an elite-bargaining exercise. Support for inclusive peace processes should thus entail complementary strategies aimed at sensitising EU staff and incentivising local/national elites on the benefits of participatory negotiations, while simultaneously empowering civil society and marginalised groups to be able to participate meaningfully and effectively in dialogue and decision-making arenas. It remains to be seen what impact the Brexit will have on the EU's approach to foreign policy in general and multi-track diplomacy in particular: the remaining EU MSs may become emboldened to enhance the EU's hard power military might, possibly at the expense of inclusive and transformative approaches to whole-of-society mediation and dialogue support.

≡ **Capability to fund:**

EU financial support for MTD takes many forms, ranging from large-scale international cooperation with global mediation partners such as the UN or the OSCE, to direct support for civil society-led dialogue initiatives in conflict-affected countries, and the provision of technical expertise, training and capacity-building for conflict parties and affected stakeholders. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has built up its capacity to disburse funds more rapidly and flexibly (e.g. through the IcSP), and has improved its funding strategies, for example by relying more extensively on EU Delegations in-country to select the most context-relevant and conflict-sensitive projects to be implemented on the ground. The EU Global Strategy seems to have taken stock of some of the constraints which limit the proactiveness and reactivity of EU financial instruments: for instance, it argues that "development funds must be stable, but lengthy programming

cycles limit the timely use of EU support, and can reduce our visibility and impact. The availability of limited sums for activities on the ground, notably for conflict prevention and civil society support, should be made more flexible. Across the Commission, flexibility will be built into our financial instruments, allowing for the use of uncommitted funds in any given year to be carried on to subsequent years to respond to crises" (EEAS 2016a, 48).

≡ **Capability to cooperate and coordinate:**

Based on the experiences of Ukraine, Georgia, Kosovo, Mali and Yemen, the EU approach to international cooperation seems to be partly based on geographic criteria: its efforts to act collectively and in close coordination with other global and regional organisations are more pronounced in interventions beyond the European neighbourhood, while EU diplomats seem more inclined to intervene as primary mediators (directly or through the intermediary of EU MSs) in conflicts closer to home. Effective cooperation with international organisations also takes place on unofficial dialogue tracks, for instance when EU financial instruments support confidence-building programmes implemented by other agencies that have a clear comparative advantage: in Georgia and Ukraine, both UNDP and the OSCE are deemed more neutral than the EU by local conflict stakeholders or their regional 'patron' (i.e. Russia).

Recommendations for the EU to build on existing MTD capabilities, mobilize new ones, deal with constraints and seize upcoming opportunities

While adequate normative guidelines that allow the EU to adopt a whole-of-society approach to MTD (thanks to EU-specific regulations such as the 2009 Concept on mediation and dialogue, or global commitments through the New Deal for engagement in fragile states, the UN Agenda 2030,[31] etc.) do seem to be in place at the policy and strategic levels, the following recommendations suggest concrete pathways to incentivise and allow EU staff, missions and institutions to live up to their inclusive and comprehensive goals.

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31 See online at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

	Recommendation	Description
TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES	**Staff training and knowledge management**	Targeted training for relevant staff in HQ and in-country would increase their awareness of MTD capabilities and their knowledge of how to use/mobilise them, and would improve the planning and conduct of EU engagement in conflict-affected contexts. Close coordination between the geographic desks and the mediation support team (MST) within the EEAS would ensure that IcSP and other funding instruments will benefit projects that have a high potential for improving the proactiveness, coherence and multi-track inclusivity of peace process support. The MST should commit to travelling to fragile and conflict-affected states on a regular basis, both to build the EUD staff's expertise in inclusive MTD and to enhance the awareness of EEAS staff in Brussels about ongoing local dynamics.
	Longer term personnel	Certain positions within EU Delegations that have strong outreach functions and necessitate extensive local contacts could gain from longer-term postings, as a thorough understanding of the intricacies of the political settlements and dynamics at play in-country is a necessary condition for identifying and accessing all relevant stakeholders across the multiple tracks of society that need to be involved in a peacebuilding strategy.
	Clearer definition and communication of EU objectives and mandates	EU Country Strategies and mission mandates for CSDP missions or EU-SRs would help streamline the multiplicity of external actors engaged in MTD in a given context by setting out clearer objectives and explicitly spelling out the respective roles of each EU actor. More transparent public communication about the roles and activities of various EU actors in-country would also help increase the visibility of EU MTD efforts. Statements of objectives on the self-defined role of the EU in a given peace process (e.g. as leading mediator, a support role, as technical advisor, or as a donor, etc.) would also increase coherence with other international actors.
POLITICAL CAPABILITIES	**Incentivise inclusive mediation and dialogue initiatives**	Clear mission statements (e.g. in Country Strategy papers) justifying why inclusive MTD is an important goal in itself would provide a stronger mandate and incentive for EU staff to increase their own expertise and to invest more time and resources in supporting inclusive channels for civil society participation in peace mediation and peacebuilding dialogue platforms.
	Engage more in bottom-up, Track II & III efforts	If political options for Track I mediation (support) are limited, the EU should invest in early and sustainable initiatives to foster bottom-up dialogue approaches through (inter)community dialogue, which can set the foundation for political agreements and societal reconciliation processes. More generally, local civil society actors should be involved at all stages of an EU intervention, from the design and implementation to the evaluation phase.
	Work purposefully on multiple levels	EU Delegations should coordinate the various tracks of engagement and policy domains/instruments of intervention, through regular information-sharing, both internally and with local and international partners. Such coordination should not be limited to the highest strategic level (heads of mission and EUMS ambassadors) but also applied at the operational level. An increased level of multi-track coordination would enhance opportunities for local development or reconciliation projects to leverage Track 1 mediation processes, and vice versa.

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