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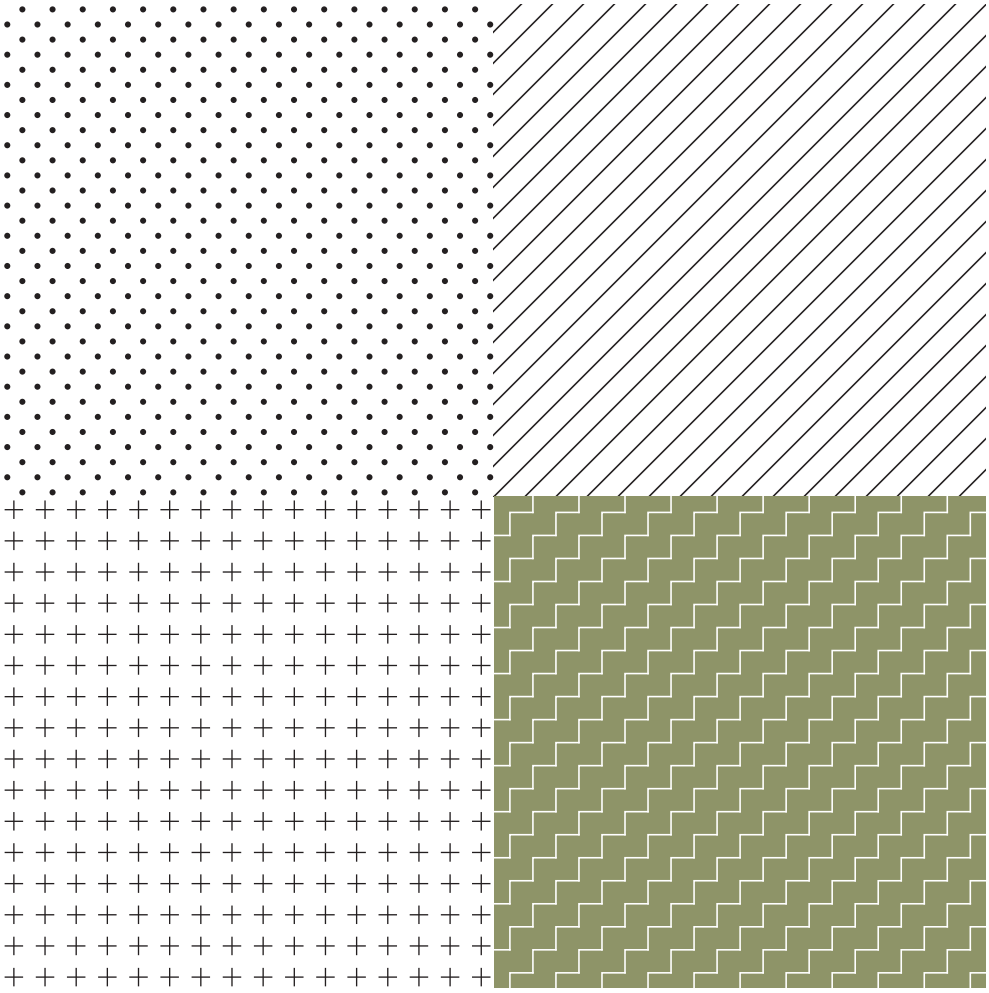

Assessing EU Support to Governance Reform

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Deliverable 2.7: Scoping Study on Governance

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Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

This scoping study was produced as part of the project "Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding", which aims to enhance the EU's peacebuilding and conflict prevention capabilities.

It is one of the seven scoping studies that aim to define the state of the art knowledge about civilian means for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and identify research gaps in relation to several cross-cutting themes and clusters that the project focuses on. More information at www.woscap.eu

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Executive Summary

While the promotion of good governance has long been at the heart of EU's assistance to peacebuilding, stability, and security, it has gained yet more prominence among the set of EU values upheld in the post-Lisbon EU (common) foreign policy agenda, closely associated – and sometimes used interchangeably – with related values such as human rights, democratisation, and the rule of law (Hout 2013).

The linkages between good governance and peacebuilding have been foremost explored through the lense of malfunctioning and poor governance as a root cause of conflict. However, there is no solid evidence for what type of support to governance reform is most likely to lead to effective, inclusive, and sustainable peacebuilding. This scoping study will touch on this debate through the prism of EU foreign policy, by identifying the inherent dilemmas and tensions related to EU governance reform support. It will do so by analysing the different EU approaches and actors, their stated aims and methods.

Given that both the academic concept of governance and the EU's own definition of the term are quite extensive and cannot be covered exhaustively here, section two will limit itself to summarising the state-of-the-art on governance and (good) governance reform support from two angles. Firstly, we will review the policy approaches of international actors such as the OECD, World Bank, and UN which are often emphasising state-centric and technocratic practice of mainstreaming good governance principles. Hence – as the literature review shows – they pay little attention to local needs which are often fundamentally linked to identity, culture, history and norms. Furthermore, a lack of sufficient political economy analysis and a weak application to design and implement governance reforms are singled out.

The second angle is the inclusivity approach which is at the heart of the Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP) project. From that perspective governance reform support can be understood as any coordinated action or initiative that aims to strengthen inclusive governance structures, processes, and outcomes by increasing their accessibility, representativeness, and responsiveness to all segments of society. Section two thus offers possible benchmarks for assessing EU governance reform support from an inclusivity and *Whole-of-Society* vantage point.

Section three will flesh out the EU's body of work on peacebuilding-related support to governance reform, examining some of the related key policies and instruments, as well as providing some empirical examples of EU governance reform support from the project's case study countries (Georgia, Mali, Ukraine and Yemen). This exploratory review suggests that the EU is primarily concerned with formal state governance reform support through different types of financial and technical assistance. This leaves open the question how the EU's existing peacebuilding support to governance reform is able to address the root causes of conflict, as well as having a transformative capacity to support inclusive whole-of-society governance.

Furthermore, the section will indicate how governance reform relates to this research project's other key cross-cutting themes and clusters. It finds that there are strong overlaps with the cross cutting themes of Gender and Local Ownership, which both play a big role in the design of good governance reform efforts. Furthermore, support to Security Sector Reforms is identified as having conceptual overlaps with EU governance reform support.

Section four summarises some of the main challenges pertaining to EU support to governance reform. Thus, it raises some explorative questions such as: in how far is EU Governance reform inclusive; engages with the local and political context; and is affected by the lack of a clear conceptual understanding of good governance reform. The section also points towards some key methodological challenges such as the difficulties to discern the impact made by EU governance support due to: 1. the variety of parallel used instruments and techniques, and 2. the complications of drawing generalizable conclusions based on the distinct case studies chosen for the WOSCAP project.