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Final Review of the CT Sahel Project December 2015



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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This report lays out the Final Review of the Contre Terrorisme Sahel intervention (CT Sahel), a project funded by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) (formerly Instrument of Stability (IfS)) of the European Union (EU). The principle objective of the programme is to “**support national capacities to combat terrorism and organised crime, and reinforce regional co-operation.**”¹ The project ran from 2011-16, and benefitted from a comprehensive Mid-term review (MTR) in 2013-14. This final review was initiated by DEVCO in order to understand the overall impact of the project, to identify key lessons learned, and to review the future possible transition arrangements related to the closure of the project.

2. CT Sahel

The CT Sahel Project could be considered the first active intervention of the European Union (EU) in the realm of counter-terrorism implemented by EU Member States. The final review has confirmed that the project has sat at the heart a number of integral internal and external strategic priorities of the EU in development and security, and that it has had a pivotal role to play in positioning the EU as a credible and valuable actor as part of a coordinated approach to addressing the growing threat of terrorism.

The project is implemented by a consortium led by the French agency CIVIPOL and was designed with two components: three national programmes providing capacity building and a limited amount of equipment, and a mutually reinforcing regional component, the Collège Sahélien de Sécurité (CSS).

Under the national pillars of the project, law enforcement agencies (police, gendarmerie, garde nationale) and specialised judicial institutions in Mali, Mauritania and Niger were offered capacity building and training opportunities with a view to improve national capacity in information and intelligence-exchange to prevent/deter organised crime and terrorism; to improve the capacity of internal security forces and judiciary of the project’s target states to pursue and respond to terrorist acts, and to support the progressive development of regional cooperation against terrorism and organised crime. National activities were coordinated by a full-time Resident Expert situated in each project country and supported by a junior expert. Each organised a series of operational trainings using training teams drawn from European security institutions to build specialised capacity to counter-terrorism.

The CCS was intended to serve as a hub of expertise for training, reflection and knowledge-sharing on organised crime and terrorism. Having a process that is genuinely nationally owned, lead and directed was central to the vision of the CSS, its creation and implementation. It was designed as a cooperation vehicle to be owned and managed by the authorities of the three partner countries on a rotating basis. The “virtual” college was based on a concept similar to the Collège Européen de Police (CEPOL) with two

¹ Terms of Reference for the CT Sahel project, including Niger, Pg. 4

core bodies, an Administrative Council that provides strategic oversight and has executive authority, and a Scientific Council, which undertakes and reviews the substantive and technical aspects of the regional training modules. The CSS is supported by a light administrative structure, including administrative support located with the revolving Presidency, and a dedicated expert support coordinator appointed by CIVIPOL. It was envisaged that the CSS would promote networking, operational coordination and build confidence between the different national institutions and between countries, with a main focus on training tasks for security institutions. The membership of the CSS began with Mali, Mauritania and Niger, and was expanded to include Burkina Faso and Chad in 2015.

3. Mid-Term Review

Between October and December 2013, CT Sahel was subject to a comprehensive Mid Term Review (MTR), published in February 2014, which concluded that CT Sahel had played an instrumental role in substantiating the aspirations and operationalizing the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Sahel, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The project was considered to have performed reasonably well at the time, holding its own against comparable initiatives deployed by other actors, but the programming environment had evolved since the project's inception. Largely as a result of the Mali crisis, donors scaled up their assistance in the security sector, and new bilateral cooperation partners began to engage with the countries of the Sahel. Thus while the design of the CT Sahel was appropriate and strategic at the time of its inception, the changes in the programming environment suggested that CT Sahel, in particular the national pillars, were no longer the optimal means by which to leverage the EU and IfS value added in the region. The MTR recommended the closing of the national pillars of the project and the transition of the activities into the regular programming of the traditional national and regional cooperation programmes or the CSDP missions in the region.

In regards to the CSS, the MTR concluded that the CSS represented a unique design with unparalleled capacity for national engagement (as compared to other regional initiatives put forward by other actors), but that the heavy management structure had resulted in serious delays in delivery for the CSS. As a consequence, at the time of the MTR, the CSS was struggling to articulate what its goals were, it had little brand recognition with either national counterparts or the international community, and had yet to prove its value. As a result of the MTR, the planned extension of the project for additional 19 months was agreed, with a budget increase of €2 million. Bilateral activities with Mauritania and Niger were concluded in August and December 2014 respectively, and the position of Resident Expert in Mauritania was terminated. The Resident Expert in Niger was reassigned as the Regional Coordinator of the CSS, to provide dedicated support to the Presidency of the CSS and to enable an up-scaled rate of delivery.

4. Final Review Findings

The security situation of the Sahel region remains extremely volatile, and under threat from spill-over effects from neighbouring regions. The situation in northern Mali and around Lake Chad, caused by the violent conflict playing out in the South of Libya and the terrorist threat from Boko Haram in the North of Nigeria, is particularly precarious. Niger has become an important hub and transit country for

migratory movements across the Sahara, and the facilitation of illicit migration has enriched and empowered a set of violent militia groups with connections to localized instability, conflict and terrorism in Libya and the Sahel.

The intertwining of the systemic socio-economic weakness, the very low capacity of states in the region, and the combined threats of organized crime (above and beyond illicit migration, also including drug trafficking) and terrorism make for a complex challenge and reduce to almost negligible levels the impact that capacity building can have in the short term. The nature of terrorism in the region is fundamentally changing both in form and in geographical focus: some interlocutors described this as a fragmentation and a widening of the threat. Where in recent years the terrorist threat was concentrated, focused on political goals or international agendas, with attacks on predominantly western, symbolic targets, instead now terrorism has morphed into a low-level localized insurgency.

To achieve a positive and stable development trajectory, the Sahel countries will need long-term, sustained reform of their state institutions based on democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, coupled with equitable development, poverty reduction and social service delivery that can build the legitimacy of the state, reduce demographic pressures and provide viable and engaging livelihood options for the countries' burgeoning youth populations. In this context, it is hard for the CT Sahel project to have identifiable impact.

4.1. CT Sahel has raised the profile and credibility of the EU as a security actor in the Sahel

There is little question that the CT Sahel project was, and has remained, fully in line with the EU priorities as outlined in the Agenda for Change, the EU Sahel Strategy and Action Plan, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The project was prescient in identifying and responding early to the threat of terrorism in the Sahel, and the intervention allowed the EU to be a first-mover in engaging and supporting the countries of the Sahel to respond. The fact that the EU was one of the earliest actors to be active in the sector, and that CT Sahel was able to maintain operations throughout the Mali crisis, resulted in a considerable rise in credibility for the EU in the security sector, and as an interlocutor to national governments in the region on peace and security issues. The EU's subsequent actions in CT and CVE have built upon the foundation laid by CT Sahel.

4.2. The CSS as the cornerstone to regional alignment

The final review found that the CSS has provided a unique value added at a regional level to an extent that could not have been foreseen even at the MTR. The CSS has become the cornerstone to a process of regional alignment, evidenced by the proliferation of regional coordination bodies, including the creation of the new G5 Sahel, which the CSS has been incorporated into. Membership of the CSS was expanded in parallel to include the two additional G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso and Chad), thereby allowing the project to remain relevant to evolving regional priorities. That the CSS has been included within the G5 Sahel should be considered as a significant achievement against the original primary objective of the project: to enhance regional cooperation.

4.3. The national pillars created a foundation for further cooperation

A reasonable assessment of impact has to be commensurate to the size and scope of the project. The CT Sahel project was not a large project - €8.7 million divided between three countries over a period of just over 4 years – in a region where the challenges of terrorism and border security in the region are extensive, and inter-dependent with a number of other factors, including the socio-economic context and regional interdependencies. Furthermore, building sustainable capacity in institutions is a generational endeavour, and it is therefore unreasonable to credibly expect a project of this size – or even one substantially larger – to have a measurable impact on improving security or counter-terrorism capacity.

At the national level, the project was effective in delivering capacity building activities to an appropriate set of target actors. After a slow start, implementation ramped up significantly in the latter half of the project and delivered 84 training activities to a total of 1963 individual officers. The national pillars laid the foundation for strong, reciprocal relationships to be built between the national authorities and the EU, and provided tangible support to the creation and promotion of specialized counter-terrorism units in the region. The national authorities in Mali and Niger spoke positively about the style of CT Sahel’s training, which was noted as being very practical and concretely built the operational capacity of front line officers. The specialized counter-terrorism unit of the judiciary in Mali, for example, gives credit to CT Sahel for its establishment and credibility.

4.4. There is a trade-off between national ownership and delivery

The model chosen for the CSS emphasised that this was intended to be a nationally owned and led process, which is partially why the CSS took such a long time to deliver results. Certainly a different process managed predominantly by external actors, could have scaled up and implemented quicker than the CSS, but it arguably may not have achieved the same level of buy-in, which then permitted the CSS to become fully owned and embedded in the regional coordination body of the G5 Sahel. Both models have value, but if the objective is to promote national ownership and a nationally lead process, particularly in the context of weak and fragile states, expectations about the speed at which delivery can be delivered should be tempered accordingly, and delivery models need to be appropriate to the level of capacity. The CSS was designed to parallel the European Police College (CEPOL) structure, which was arguably overly sophisticated for the level of cooperation and capacity demonstrated by West African and Sahelian states. This further slowed the capacity of the CSS to implement and add value.

4.5. The EU has significant value-added in promoting CVE

One of the key takeaways from the strategic review process that has been undertaken for this project is the extent of the challenge in genuinely building capacity to counter-terrorism from an operational perspective, given the weakness of state institutions, the porosity of the region’s borders, and the degree to which socio-economic considerations undermine state-building and development. In this context, isolated security sector approaches are challenged to have impact. These dynamics, coupled with the fact that the EU is by far the largest development donor in the region, perhaps a sharpened focus at countering violent extremism both through direct programming and through the other development instruments at a national and regional level, would provide a more substantial return on investment.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Extension
AEI	Agency for European Integration (Austria)
CEPOL	Collège Européen de Police
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSS	Collège Sahélien de Sécurité
CT	Counter-Terrorism
CTC	EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator
CT Sahel	Project du Contre Terrorisme Sahel
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
FIIAPP	Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (Spain)
GCCS	Global Centre for Cooperative Security
ICCT	International Centre for Counter Terrorism – The Hague
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IfS	Instrument for Stability
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
MTR	Mid-Term Review
OCAM	Organe de Coordination pour L'Analyse de la Menace (Belgium)
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SMART	Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (indicators)
STRIVE	Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (EU in Horn of Africa)
UN	United Nations
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Review

This report lays out the Final Review of the Contre Terrorisme Sahel intervention (CT Sahel) a project funded by Art. 5 of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) (formerly Instrument of Stability (IfS)) of the European Union (EU). The principle objective of the project was specified as being to **“support national capacities to combat terrorism and organised crime, and reinforce regional co-operation.”**²

The project was conceived to run for an initial period of 2011-14 and was extended for an additional year until May 2016 (with activities actually ending in December 2015), following the Mid-term review (MTR) of the project in 2013-14. This final review was initiated by the European Commission in order to understand the overall impact of the project, to identify key lessons learned, and to review the future transition arrangements related to the closure of the project. The review has also utilized the draft ‘Operational human rights guidance for EU external cooperation actions on Counter-Terrorism, Organised Crime, Cybercrime and Cybersecurity’ as a pilot initiative.

The review drew upon resources within the newly created CT MORSE project, an independent project of the IcSP intended to enhance policy, monitoring and coherence of the EU’s actions in counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism on a global basis. CT MORSE is a project implemented by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in a consortium with the Global Centre for Cooperative Security (GCCS); the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, and the International Centre for Counter Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT).

This review was not intended to be a formal evaluation, in the sense of EuropeAid’s formal evaluation criteria and methodology, but is a strategic exercise intended to inform EU programming and forward thinking about the future of the EU’s counter-terrorism and related security programming in the Sahel.

1.2. Synthesis of the EU’s Strategy and Programmes

The CT Sahel project was the active intervention of the European Union (EU) in the realm of counter-terrorism implemented by EU Member States globally. As such, the project has been at the heart of a number of integral internal and external strategic priorities of the EU in development and security, and has had a pivotal role to play in positioning the EU as a credible and valuable actor as part of a coordinated approach to addressing this growing threat.

It is one of the central principles of the EU that neither internal nor external security can be achieved in isolation from development objectives. In 2011, the *EU Agenda for Change*³ emphasised the need for greater coherence in policies tackling the challenges of security, fragile states, poverty and transition to

² Terms of Reference for the CT Sahel project, including Niger, Pg. 4

³ EC (2011) Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change, Brussels: European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/documents/agenda_for_change_en.pdf

development. As such there has been a great effort to understand and maximise the coherence and synergies between the EU's different instruments and capabilities, including the European Development Fund (EDF), and the military and civilian capabilities of the EU Member States.

Programming in counter-terrorism have been high on the EU's agenda since at least 2003, when the European Security Strategy (ESS) identified terrorism as a key threat to European internal and external security and prompted the development of the *EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy*⁴ endorsed by the European Council on 30 November 2005. It also called for increased counter-terrorism cooperation with third countries and the United Nations. The EU Counter Terrorism Strategy is based on respect for human rights and international law, and follows a four-pronged approach of (i) preventing radicalisation, recruitment and the factors behind them; (ii) protecting potential targets; (iii) pursuing terrorists, and (iv) responding to the aftermath of an attack. The Strategy promotes democracy, dialogue and good governance as a means to tackle the root causes of radicalisation. The Council Conclusions of 23 May 2011 on enhancing the links between internal and external aspects of counter-terrorism called for the capacity of competent authorities involved in the fight against terrorism in third countries to be strengthened in the strategic programming of the Instrument for Stability (IfS) established by Regulation (EC) No. 1717/2006. The Council Conclusions on Counter-Terrorism of 9 February 2015 (6048/15) also emphasised the need to "step up" external action on counter terrorism and its mainstreaming into EU foreign policy, whilst at the same time working towards more actions on the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism.

The *Agenda for Change* prioritised assistance to those countries most vulnerable, and the three countries of the Sahel – Mali, Mauritania and Niger - are central. Since 2004, the Sahel has been a priority for the EU, as enshrined by the *EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*,⁵ endorsed by the European Council in July 2011. The formulation of the Sahel Strategy was the result of two years of discussions and concerns over the series of interlocking challenges arising in the region, intending to secure the EU's development investments through an increasing focus on the security dimension. Many EU security and development actors were invested in the formulation of this strategy, including EEAS, DEVCO and the Office of the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (CTC), and were prescient around the terrorism threat the Sahel posed regionally and its implications for Europe. The Strategy's objectives were laid out as "tackling the root causes of extreme poverty and [...] creating the grass-root conditions for economic opportunity and human development." The Strategy was revised and discussed during the Foreign Affairs Council in March 2014. The Council concluded to extend the implementation of the Strategy to Burkina Faso and Chad, and suggested developing a new Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

⁴ EC, (2005) *EU Counter Terrorism Strategy*, Brussels: European Commission
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&gc=true&sc=false&f=ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204&r=http%3A%2F%2Fregister.consilium.europa.eu%2Fpd%2Fen%2F05%2Fst14%2Fst14469-re04.en05.pdf>

⁵ EEAS, (2005) *EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*, Brussels: External Action Service
http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf

In 2015, the Sahel Strategy was revised and operationalised through the *EU Sahel Strategy Regional Action Plan 2015-2020*⁶ which reaffirms the EU's continued engagement in the Sahel region and its support to sustainable and inclusive political and socio-economic development, the strengthening of human rights, democratic governance and the rule of law, as well as resilience, as a response to the multi-dimensional crisis in the Sahel. The Action Plan provides a solid basis for pursuing the objectives of the Strategy and for reinforcing the EU's focus around four domains highly relevant to the stabilisation of the region, namely prevention and countering radicalisation, creation of appropriate conditions for youth, migration, mobility and border management, the fight against illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime. The enhancement of security in the region through the fight against terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism remains the key objective of the EU in the programme, and the Strategy explicitly recognises that strengthening human rights and the rule of law will remain a critical component of the Regional Action Plan as a response to the multi-dimensional crisis in the Sahel.

In the Council Decision that endorsed the Action Plan, the EU underlined in particular the importance of fostering closer synergies between countries of the region as well as between the Sahel and neighbouring countries. Given the proximity of the Sahel to the EU and its immediate neighbourhood, it notes the need, in order to better tackle cross-border issues, to explore further a common space for dialogue and cooperation between the Sahel, the Maghreb and the EU in relevant sectors such as security and migration.

In the context of its comprehensive approach, including the contribution of the EU Institutions, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel, as well as of EU Member States, the EU reiterates its commitment to support regional and country-led and owned initiatives in the framework of the Action Plan, using all its relevant instruments, in particular the regional and national indicative programmes under the EDF, Member States bilateral programmes, and also including the CSDP Missions (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali) and the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).

The Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) was created in 2014⁷ as the successor instrument to the Instrument for Stability (IfS). The specific objectives of the IcSP as laid out in its Regulation “are (a) in a situation of crisis or emerging crisis to contribute swiftly to stability by providing an effective response designed to help preserve, establish or re-establish the conditions essential to the proper implementation of the Union’s external policies and actions [...]; (b) to contribute to the prevention of conflicts and to ensuring capacity and preparedness to address pre- and post-crisis situations and build peace; and (c) to address specific global and trans-regional threats to peace, international security and stability.”

What sets the IcSP most distinctly apart from the other EU funding instruments is that it is not bound by the ODA rules, and thus is one instrument in the development portfolio that can directly fund counter-

⁶ EU, (2015) Council conclusions on the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020 (7823/15), 20 April 2015

⁷ European Parliament, Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 creating the instrument contributing to stability and peace, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/140311_icsp_reg_230_2014_en.pdf

terrorism programmes. Furthermore, unlike the geographic instruments that have country-specific and regional approaches, the IcSP can operate at the trans-regional level. Its value is therefore in its flexibility and ability to tackle issues, such as terrorism, that are global or trans-regional in nature.

1.3. CT Sahel Project

The *Contre Terrorisme Sahel project* (2011-15) (CT Sahel) was initially financed under article 4.1 of the IfS, and later under its successor instrument, the IcSP under Article 5, “Assistance in addressing global and trans-regional threats and emerging threats”, in the long-term component.

The principle objective of the programme is specified as being to “**support national capacities to combat terrorism and organised crime, and reinforce regional co-operation**”. In order to achieve this objective, the project has four intended outcomes:

- i. Sahel states have a common framework for dialogue on training, exchange of experience and knowledge sharing regarding counter-terrorism and organised crime.
- ii. States improve their capacity to share operational information, for example, intelligence regarding terrorist activities and serious crime (trans-border trafficking) including at the international level, and have greater capacity to prevent terrorist acts.
- iii. States have the capacity to adequately respond to terrorist acts as they take place on an operational and judicial level.
- iv. International actors in the region put in place a mechanism for coordination and consultation.

The project was conceived for an initial period of three years, from 2011-14, with a budget of €6.7 million for Mali, Mauritania and shortly after Niger was also added. In 2014, an additional €2 million was added to allow the extension of the project for an additional year.

The project is implemented by a consortium led by French CIVIPOL, and including Spanish *Fundacion Internacional y para Iberoamerica de Administracion y Politicas Publicas* (FIIAPP), Belgian *Organe de Coordination pour l’analyse de la Menace* (OCAM), Italian *Comando Generale dell’Arma dei Carabinieri* and the Austrian *Agency for European Integration* (AEI). The project is managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), who provide strategic guidance and technical follow-up of activities from Brussels, with a regional liaison point for all IcSP long term activities based in Dakar.

CT Sahel was designed with two components, i.e. three national programmes providing capacity building and a limited amount of equipment, and a mutually reinforcing regional component, the Collège Sahélien de Sécurité (CSS).

Under the national pillars of the project, law enforcement agencies (police, gendarmerie, garde nationale) and specialised judicial institutions in Mali, Mauritania and Niger are offered capacity building and training opportunities with a view to improve national capacity in information and intelligence-exchange to prevent/deter organised crime and terrorism; to improve the capacity of internal security forces and judiciary of the project’s target states to pursue and respond to terrorist acts, and to support

the progressive development of regional cooperation against terrorism and organised crime. National activities were coordinated by a full-time Resident Expert situated in each project country and supported by a junior expert. Each organised a series of operational trainings using training teams drawn from European security institutions to build specialised capacity to counter-terrorism.

The CCS was intended to serve as a hub of expertise for training, reflection and knowledge-sharing on organised crime and terrorism. It was designed as a cooperation vehicle to be owned and managed by the authorities of the three partner countries on a rotating basis. The “virtual” college was based on a concept similar to the Collège Européen de Police (CEPOL) with two core bodies, an Administrative Council that provides strategic oversight and has executive authority, and a Scientific Council, which undertakes and reviews the substantive and technical aspects of the regional training modules being development. The Administrative Council includes representatives from the five countries (Chad and Burkina having been added in May 2015) designated by each State from the institutions of their choice. The Scientific Council is composed of a maximum of ten experts from various authorities involved in the fight against terrorism and organised crime in the three countries, as well as recognised experts in the field. For the first four years of the project, the Scientific Council played an active role and met regularly. However, as it was decided at a meeting of the the Administrative Council in October 2014, that the whole structure of the CSS was too heavy, and they thereby decided to reduce the role of the Scientific Council to a standing consultative function for national activities.

The CSS is supported by a light administrative structure, including administrative support located with the revolving Presidency, and a dedicated expert support coordinator appointed by CIVIPOL. It was envisaged that the CSS would promote networking, operational coordination and build confidence between the different national institutions and between countries, with a main focus on training tasks for security institutions.

Having a process that is genuinely nationally owned, lead and directed was central to the vision of the CSS, its creation and implementation. It is for this reason that the CSS was created as a virtual entity with a revolving Presidency, rather than being physically located in one of the member countries. Similarly, the heavy two-tier management structure was designed to ensure that national stakeholders were broadly invested in the process and had ownership over the decisions taken. Finally, the CSS model for capacity building also emphasised the importance of national leadership: the selection of subjects, the creation of the training modules and the delivery of the trainings were all undertaken by national actors selected by the Scientific Board and finally endorsed by the Administrative Council.

1.4. Mid-Term Review

Between October and December 2013, CT Sahel was subject to a comprehensive Mid Term Review (MTR), published in February 2014. The MTR examined the CT Sahel project against the five evaluation criteria endorsed by the OECD-DAC (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact), and the EC-specific evaluation criteria (EC added-value and coherence). The review also sought to verify, analyse and assess the integration and impact of cross-cutting issues in the programme, with a particular emphasis on human rights and governance aspects.

The review concluded that the CT Sahel project 2011-14, played an instrumental role in substantiating the aspirations and operationalizing the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Sahel, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The project performed reasonably well, and holds its own against comparable initiatives deployed by other actors.

The MTR further observed, however, that the programming environment evolved since the project's inception. Largely as a result of the Mali crisis, donors scaled up their assistance in the security sector, and new bilateral cooperation partners began to engage with the countries of the Sahel. A mapping exercise that was undertaken as part of the MTR found that there were a total of 96 separate projects offering technical assistance in the security and justice sectors, and that law enforcement capacity building aimed at the civilian security institutions was by far the dominant form of assistance being offered. Thus while the design of the CT Sahel was appropriate and strategic at the time of its inception, the changes in the programming environment, lessons learned and the evolution of understanding suggested that CT Sahel, in particular the national pillars, are no longer the optimal means by which to leverage the EU, and specifically the IfS, value added in the region. The MTR recommended the closing of the national pillars of the project and the transition of the activities into the regular programming of the EU Delegations or the CSDP missions in the region.

In regards to the CSS, the MTR concluded that the CSS represented a unique design with unparalleled capacity for national engagement (as compared to other regional initiatives put forward by other actors), but that the heavy management structure had resulted in serious delays in delivery for the CSS. As a consequence, at the time of the MTR, the CSS was struggling to articulate what its goals were, it had little brand recognition with either national counterparts or the international community, and had yet to prove its value. That said the CSS was beginning to move in innovative directions with the modules selected, and could potentially offer an innovative contribution to regional cooperation, knowledge sharing and operational coordination. The MTR recommended the strengthening of the CSS mechanism, with additional oversight to ensure that the CSS could benefit from international best practice.

As a result of the MTR, the planned extension of the project for one additional year was agreed, with an additional budget increase of €2 million. Bilateral activities with Mauritania and Niger were concluded in August 2014 and December 2014 respectively, and the position of Resident Expert in Mauritania was terminated. The Resident Expert in Niger was reassigned as the Regional Coordinator of the CSS, to provide dedicated support to the Presidency of the CSS and to enable an up-scaled rate of delivery. In addition, supplementary Key Expert days were dedicated to providing support to the CSS by the subject matter experts, in order to allow greater oversight and engagement with the substantive content of the training modules.

2. Regional Context Analysis

2.1. A zone of fragility in the Sahara

The three countries of the Sahel – Mali, Mauritania and Niger – are among the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world, with indicators at the very bottom of global human development indices. Widely known for their vast “ungoverned spaces”, the Sahel countries sit in the heart of a perfect storm of human security, facing multiple challenges.

The Sahel region is still regularly hit by humanitarian crises, with more than 20 million people food insecure in 2015 of which more than 4 million in need of emergency food assistance, and as such, remains one of the main regions in Africa targeted by humanitarian assistance. Extreme poverty, drought and cyclical food insecurity, rapid population growth, weak governance and state institutions, corruption, internal tensions, separatist conflicts and a range of active terrorist groups, and illicit trafficking of different kinds, including in drugs, arms and people, undermine human security and there is a critical need to address underlying vulnerabilities and build resilience. The problems in the Sahel are cross-border and closely intertwined, and few regions better exemplify the inter-dependence of security, human rights and development challenges.

The security situation of the Sahel region remains extremely volatile and under threat from spill-over effects from neighbouring regions. The situation in northern Mali and around Lake Chad, caused by the violent conflict playing out in the South of Libya and the terrorist threat from Boko Haram in the North of Nigeria, is particularly precarious. The attacks of 20th November 2015 at the Radisson Blu, a luxury hotel located at the heart of Bamako, during which about 20 of the 170 hostages died, is yet another evidence of how fragile the country remains in terms of security, and is a sharp reminder of the entire region’s vulnerability towards the ubiquitous threat posed by terrorism.

Niger has become an important hub and transit country for migratory movements across the Sahara, and the facilitation of illicit migration has enriched and empowered a set of violent militia groups with connections to localized instability, conflict and terrorism in Libya and the Sahel.

At the same time, large swathes of territory remain out of reach of the central state. And even where and when the state is present, it often lacks full legitimacy with the variety of communities within the country. The paucity of a political commitment from the governments in the Sahel to uphold international standards and norms for human rights constitutes both a root cause and symptom of recurring crises in the region. This is exacerbated by weak rule of law institutions, corruption, a general lack of accountability, social and gender inequities and repeated discrimination against certain marginalised groups.

There is a general sense that the intertwining of the systemic socio-economic weakness, the very low capacity and legitimacy of states in the region, and the combined threats of organized crime (above and beyond illicit migration, also including drug trafficking) and terrorism make for a complex challenge and reduce to almost negligible levels the impact that capacity building can have.

To achieve a positive and stable development trajectory, the Sahel countries will need long-term, sustained reform of their state institutions based on democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, coupled with equitable development, poverty reduction and social service delivery that can build the legitimacy of the state by re-connecting the state to the citizens. Only this reconnection can contribute to the reduction of demographic pressures and provide viable and engaging livelihood options for the countries' burgeoning youth populations and reduce the mobilizing force of the alternative offered by gangs, organised illegal activities and other (political) violent groups.

2.2. The evolving threat of terrorism and extremism in the Sahel

The nature of the threat from terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel has evolved since the time of the MTR. With the splintering of the Sahel based terrorist groups, the increasing virulence and encroachment of Boko Haram and the influence of ISIS across the Maghreb and Sinai, the Sahel states are being pressured from all sides.

More importantly, the nature of terrorism in the region is fundamentally changing both in form and in geographical focus: some interlocutors described this as a fragmentation and a widening of the threat. Where in recent years the terrorist threat was concentrated, focused on political goals or international agendas, with attacks on predominantly western, symbolic targets, instead now terrorism has morphed into a low-level localized insurgency.

In Mali, terrorist groups are increasingly organized in smaller groups based on their shared language and cultural background or ethnicity, with similar characteristics to Nigeria's insurgent terrorist group, Boko Haram. There is evidence of a strategic re-orientation towards the south of the country, with a growing number of attacks in Bamako and further south. Experts speculated that this is part of a strategy to divide the attentions of international and national security forces from the North of the country. In either context the result has been greater insecurity and a further stretching of the capacity of state institutions to address it. Political will is critical to having impact against this challenge, but the Government is stretched thin with the implementation of the peace accords, the challenge of growing illicit migration, the misfit between imported concepts of governance and diverging priorities. There is arguably neither the attention nor the budget to have real impact in the security sector.

In Niger, fundamentalist Islam is gaining potency in the country, and this has been highlighted as a dangerous trend. While these supporters of fundamentalist interpretation of Islam are not violent for the moment, there is a general sense that Niger is a tinderbox and that continued governance or development and governance failures will result in further radicalization of the population as the appeal of religious fundamentalism was widely attributed to poverty, inequality and lack of government service delivery, particularly in terms of service delivery such as secular education. The same three features were highlighted as being reasons for why terrorist groups may prove more successful in recruiting and gaining legitimacy with local populations, thereby pointing urgently to the need to engage both with CVE specific development approaches and CT security interventions. Certain anti-western sentiments were also mentioned as a relevant element in the traction of fundamentalism in Niger. As the influence of those that support the more fundamentalist approach to religion gain ground in the government, and

with elections planned for 2016, there are reasons to have concern about Niger's future trajectory and stability.

While the terrorist threat in Mauritania remains lower than in the other countries in the Sahel, observers are quick to point out that all the necessary pre-requisites to the rise of violent extremism are present in the country and, like in Niger, radical Islamic trends seem to have considerably grown over the past 5 years. Mauritania is a country that has rather unique historical and cultural characteristics, which stands as a bridge between North and Sub Saharan Africa, and whose delicate internal balance could be destabilised by the violent conflicts and fragility in both of these neighbouring regions.

There is no direct and clear evidence that active recruitment takes place by terrorist groups in the region, however the uncontrollable nature of these small – yet widely scattered – terrorist groups is a major concern in terms of security. Tense ethnic relations and poor living standards combined actually drive local populations, especially the youth, into the arms of terrorist groups (e.g. DAESH, MUJAO, Ansar Eddine, AQIM, etc).

Questions of counter-terrorism and violent extremism have been somewhat overshadowed by the issue of illicit migration, which preoccupies the conversations and concerns of the European and international organizations. There has been a sudden growth in the number of projects focused on this topic, and security related programmes have been partially re-orientated to also address clandestine migration and human trafficking which is somewhat detracting from a focus on terrorism directly. However, the majority of these interventions continue to be in the area of capacity building for security and justice institutions, for dialogue in border regions, and socio-economic interventions in communities deemed vulnerable, which may not be a significant programmatic diversion, but it does affect political prioritisation.

2.3. Growing regional alignment

During the design phase of the CT Sahel project, the lack of coordination between the states in the region was considered a major obstacle and strengthening the capacity for coordination was a key goal of the project. Since that time, however, a number of new initiatives have been launched on the regional level in order to respond to the need for closer coordination and collective action, signalling an unprecedented alignment between the states of the Sahel. These include, *inter alia*:

- Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) launched in Ouagadougou in December 2012
- The Nouackchott Process in 2013 to promote collective security in the region under the AU auspices;
- The Bamako ministerial platform launched after the joint (UN, African Union, World Bank, EU) high-level visit to the region in 2013;
- The revitalisation of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to tackle common border issues in response to the growth of Boko Haram; and
- The creation of the G5 Sahel in 2014 to address the main challenges of the Sahel, particularly in the field of security and development.

Countering terrorism and the growth of violent extremism is an obvious priority for the countries in the region and the motivation for the creation of many of these structures. At the time of the inception of the CT Sahel project and the MTR, the G5 Sahel had not yet been conceived. In the project formulation process, one of the most important priorities was to create a platform for regional collaboration, but the longstanding political and socio-cultural tensions in the region made that seem a distant goal.

The growing alignment and cooperation amongst the countries in the region, their efforts to move towards a common understanding of the challenges facing the region and the need for collaborative responses is unprecedented, and offers a number of opportunities for the international community to support new approaches.

While still in an embryonic phase, the G5 Sahel is very promising in this regard. The G5 Sahel is an institutional coordination and regional platform focused on the cooperation of its member countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) regarding development and security priorities in the Sahel region. It was officially launched on the 16th February 2014, described as a “platform to promote dialogue and cooperation between five member countries with mutual concerns”. The permanent Secretariat of the G5 Sahel is established in Mauritania.

One of the explicitly stated priorities of the body is promote strategies to counter terrorism. Thus, an initial action has been the creation of a “Security and Defence Committee” to serve as a coordination platform for security matters. That body envisages a number of sub-structures, including a “Centre for Strategic Study”, and a regional training college. Although its official status and role need to be further detailed, it was officially decided that the CSS would be housed under the administrative supervision of the G5 Sahel, during the G5 Sahel Summit held in N’Djamena, Chad, on 20th November 2015

3. Main Findings and Analysis

This final review was initiated by the European Commission in order to understand the overall impact of the project, to identify key lessons learned, and to review the future transition arrangements related to the closure of the project. The review has also utilized the ‘Operational human rights guidance for EU external cooperation actions on Counter-Terrorism, Organised Crime, Cybercrime and Cybersecurity’ as a pilot initiative.

The conclusions of the final review are based on a series of consultations with key stakeholders in Brussels and Paris (CIVIPOL), field visits in the project countries in September and October 2015: Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and participation in a national pillar training in Mali, and a CSS training hosted in Mauritania.

Whilst not an evaluation in the sense of EuropeAid’s formal evaluation criteria and methodology, the findings of this final review process are organised against the five evaluation criteria endorsed by the OECD-DAC (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact), and two EC-specific evaluation criteria (EC added-value and coherence). The review has also sought to verify, analyse and assess the integration and impact of cross-cutting issues in the project, with a particular emphasis on human rights and governance aspects. , utilizing .

Review Criteria ⁸	
Relevance	The extent to which the intervention is suited to the priorities and policies of the beneficiary, country needs, global priorities and partners and donor policies.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development interventions’ objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources / inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to key results.
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.
Impact	Positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced by development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
Coherence	This criterion may have several dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence within the Commission’s development programme • Coherence / Complementarity with their partner country’s policies and with other donors’ interventions • Coherence / complementarity with other Community policies.
EC value-added	The extent to which the project adds benefit to what would have resulted from Member States’ interventions in the same context.

Figure 1: Final Review Criteria

⁸ EC Evaluation Guidelines: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/guidelines/gbb_det_en.htm#02_06

The period of the review – from July to October 2015 – was a dynamic period in which a number of issues relating both to national stability, regional coherence and EU internal investments had yet to be resolved. The future of the CT Sahel Project is being considered as part of a set of broader issues, including prevailing security and protection concerns in regards to border security and human mobility, the nascent structures of the G5 are being defined, and transitions in EU personnel and funding (from 10th to 11th EDF) were underway. The establishment of an “Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa” was also under discussion during the period, which was anticipated to inject some €1.8 billion into the continent in support of activities ranging from research, employment generation, development and security interventions. It was unclear at the time of the review whether the Trust Fund would have the scope to undertake either some of the capacity building activities of the project, or finance continued support to the CSS. The discussions surrounding these processes have had implications for the capacity of the review team to evaluate impact and assess future direction. Therefore, the findings and analysis presented herewith should be contextualised within the point in time in which they are being made, and the subsequent recommendations should be reviewed, rationalized and amended as necessary in light of subsequent shifts in the programming environment and decisions that will be taken on other funding instruments and strategic priorities.

3.1. Relevance

There is little question that the CT Sahel project was, and has remained, fully in line with the EU priorities as outlined in the Agenda for Change, the EU Sahel Strategy and Action Plan, and the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The project was a prescient in identifying and responding early to the threat of terrorism in the Sahel, and the intervention allowed the EU to be a first-mover in engaging and supporting the countries of the Sahel to respond. The escalation of the terrorist challenge, evidenced by the coup in Mali in 2010-11, led to a rapid proliferation of actors keen to engage in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. The comprehensive mapping exercise undertaken as part of the MTR found that between 2012 and 2013, the number of initiatives in the security and justice sectors jumped from 10 to 28, and the number of international donors contributing to the sector rose fourfold from five to twenty. However, the fact that the EU was one of the earliest actors to be active in the sector, and that CT Sahel was able to maintain operations throughout the Mali crisis, resulted in a considerable rise in credibility for the EU in the security sector, and as an interlocutor to national governments in the region on peace and security issues.

Given the changing nature of the terrorist threat in the region, addressing terrorism has risen as a priority for national governments in the region. The increase in numbers and virulence of terrorist groups across a wider geographic area, and the apparent synergies being created between them, has made the need for capacity building domestically and enhanced regional cooperation a serious priority. The CT Sahel project and the CSS have been well-positioned to reinforce both of those national and regional objectives. The evolving nature of terrorism and rising fundamentalism also speaks to the need to redefine the way that terrorism threats are addressed in the Sahel: strategies for the state to engage

with their constituencies through civil society representatives and directly or indirectly with vulnerable groups were emphasised, and programming to counter violent extremism have also been noted as priorities.

As the requirement for regional cooperation across an enlarged area became paramount, evidenced, for example, by the creation of the G5 Sahel, the project was able to respond accordingly. Membership of the CSS was expanded in parallel to include the two additional G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso and Chad), thereby allowing the project to remain relevant to evolving regional priorities.

This said, however, national authorities also emphasised the need for support and attention in other areas. The illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, including cocaine, the rising production and trade in methamphetamines and the longstanding trafficking of hashish has also had significant impact in terms of connections to state structures and financing of terrorism. Enhanced support by the international community in understanding and addressing these phenomena, such as the IcSP initiative under the Cocaine Route Programme⁹, would be welcomed. In this respect, it is relevant to note that two IcSP funded projects under the Cocaine Route Programme: AIRCOP and WAPIS, are being already implemented in Mali and Niger to support anti-drug capacities in airports and the collection, centralisation, management, sharing and police information in West African countries, respectively.

A rising priority for the international community, and in particular the EU and its member states, is preventing illicit migration across the Sahel. Niger is one of the primary gateways for sub-Saharan migrants to transit to North Africa, and Libya in particular, in their efforts to cross the Mediterranean. However, while this is an issue of clear importance for the EU, it is not of equivalent concern for the states of the Sahel, and national authorities raised some concern that the importance of the sustained fight against terrorism and violent extremism should be diluted by other priorities such as migration.

3.2. Effectiveness

The general objective of the CT Sahel project was specified as being to “support national capacities to combat terrorism and organised crime, and reinforce regional cooperation.” For those involved in the project formulation process, the most important part of this objective was to create a platform for regional collaboration - the national pillars were intended to provide an incentive for regional collaboration and to create a common baseline of capacity. Therefore, the proliferation and growth of regional cooperation mechanisms, such as the G5 Sahel, and the central role that the CSS has been offered, could be taken as an indicator of effectiveness of the project.

At the national level, the project was effective in delivering capacity building activities to an appropriate set of target actors. After a slow start, implementation ramped up significantly in the latter half of the project. As shown in the figure below, at the time of the MTR, a total of 26 trainings have been

⁹ The Cocaine Route Programme is an EU funded programme aiming at staunching flows of illicit goods and facilitating communication and cooperation of criminal investigators and prosecutors. Its current focus is on transnational organised crime in Latin America, the Caribbean, West Africa and Europe. See more on: <http://www.cocaineroute.eu>

conducted across the 3 countries, with 600 participants. By June 2015, the project had delivered 84 training activities (1 to 3 weeks long each) and delivered by both European and African trainers to a total of 1963 individual officers.

Training Type	Expertise	Mali	Niger	Mauritania	Total
Intelligence gathering- Investigation-Intervention - Security	FSI	248	461	173	882
	Justice	73	30	57	160
	Total	321	491	230	1042
Justice – Criminal proceedings	FSI	85	27	5	404
	Justice	215	79	110	382
	Total	300	106	115	521
Terrorism crisis management	Diverse	135	139	21	295
CSS	Diverse	34	38	33	105
Grand Total		790	774	399	1,963

Figure 2: CT Sahel Trainees (by field of expertise) (April 2012 – June 2015)

While some training was delivered specific to one unit or corps – for example, many of the trainings have focused on strengthening the specialised judicial unit on counter-terrorism in Mali – on the whole CT Sahel has sought to promote cross-divisional trainings. These bring together officers from the police, gendarmes, garde nationale and the prosecutors from different districts onto the same training course, in order to promote operational level working relationships. The trainings focus on practical skills building and using an interactive style including exercises and practicums. These features were highly commended by national beneficiaries as being a value-added of CT Sahel distinct from other actors providing capacity building.

The national authorities in Mali and Niger spoke positively about the style of CT Sahel’s training, which, was noted as being very practical, enjoyable and concretely built both the operational capacity of front line officers and helped to create the personal connections that can make a difference in security related response mechanisms. A number of examples were given of where CT Sahel training was translated into more effective responses to the terror threat (for example, see the case study below). It is worth observing this style of training as a good practice for security sector capacity building.

Case Study: Strengthening capacity for complex investigations

(2015) Authorities in Niger spotted a Boko Haram member from Nigeria, who had obviously been trained by AQIM in Timbuktu, before going back to Diffa to hide in his community. When authorities decided to intervene and arrest him, they took his brother into custody by mistake. The brother did not declare anything and was apparently determined to protect his brother’s identity. The various trainings provided by CT Sahel on investigation procedures, phone data management and surveillance allowed them to do further investigations and realise that the actual criminal was still at large. Four months later, he was eventually arrested.

Figure 3: An example of direct impact by CT Sahel

A cross-cutting goal of the project was to strengthen and ensure adherence to human rights norms and standards. Human rights and the rule of law are core values of the European Union, embedded in the

Treaty of Lisbon and reinforced by the Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted by the EU in 2000. Adherence to human rights principles constitutes the foundation and basic prerequisite for peace, security and prosperity, and the EU is fully committed to promoting and defending them both within its borders and in its relations with partner countries. For the EU, human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and are a silver thread that runs throughout its external policies and activities, since not only are the EU human rights obligations binding, but their promotion is important for other objectives such as security, development, economic participation and social inclusion. While it is difficult to prove a causal link between the absence of human rights and the rise of terrorism and violent extremism, global experience emphasises that rebuilding human rights must be a core principle in any successful response.

The EU's Strategy and Action Plan for the Sahel also includes a strong human rights component. However, it must be recognised that the Sahel is a region where the understanding and adherence to human rights principles is arguably of a different standard. The level of fragility and ongoing complex conflicts mean that violations of human rights are widespread, and *"cannot be disaggregated from a general crisis of governance, encompassing widespread corruption in public office, weak provision of basic services, poor implementation of social and economic rights, and particularly in the vast and often sparsely populated Saharan regions, profound challenges in upholding the rule of law and maintaining effective border controls,"*¹⁰

There is no doubt that the approach taken by CT Sahel to implement its counter-terrorism strategy into the Sahel region contributed to not only the strengthening of extant bodies (e.g. the judiciary, internal security forces) but also the communication and cooperation habits they had somewhat lost. From the beginning of its activities, until the end of the project's mandate, the CT Sahel team created trainings with particular emphasis on the respect and defence of human rights when dealing with terrorism and organised crime. A majority of these trainings focused on the strict application and respect of the law and of the code of criminal procedure while protecting human lives (including defendants), and acting in full compliance with official procedures (e.g. phone-tapping, shadowing).

That said, the CT Sahel project was not designed with a comprehensive rights-based approach, though it does adhere to human rights principles, and metrics to measure performance against human rights indicators were not included in the project design, which makes it difficult to address effectiveness. It is clear that human rights issues were integrated into all components and outputs of the project, adapting their integration to each type of training. Although no dedicated module to the topic was presented either within the national pillars or in the CSS, it was instead introduced in a cross-cutting way among trainings. The CT Sahel's efforts to re-establish a viable dialogue around human rights between the judiciary and security forces in the Sahel will need to be reinforced by continuous support above and beyond what the project can achieve if a significant impact on the human rights situation of the countries in the Sahel, given the systemic nature of the issues described above.

¹⁰ European Parliament "Report on the situation of human rights in the Sahel region" (2013/2020(INI)), 8 October 2013

To impact the understanding, relevance and adherence to human rights, these issues will require multiple, reinforcing interventions, and will need to be addressed at a higher level and with greater political and financial support over the long-term, as outlined in the Sahel Action Plan.

3.3. Efficiency

For a relatively small project, CT Sahel has punched above its weight in raising the profile of the EU in counter-terrorism, and achieved results that were disproportionate to its size and scope.

The MTR observed a number of ways that the project could have achieved greater efficiencies. Arguably, the most pertinent of these related to the contracting modality chosen for the project: a service contract. This constrained the flexibility of the project to adapt to a rapidly changing programming environment, and created an undue burden of bureaucracy around procurement rules and other administration which hampered the speed at which the project could deliver.

Much of the justification for the initial failure of the project (both national and regional components) was attributed to struggles with procurement and contracting even for relatively low value activities. Even during the final review period, national authorities spoke with some frustration in delays and complications around basic transactions (the purchase of flights, per diems, issuing of consultancy contracts) that led to delays in events and deliverables.

This was then compounded with the arguably over-complicated structure designed for the CSS, which placed a greater emphasis on management structure than on delivery. The dominant focal point for the CSS in Mauritania, the Mauritanian Institute for Strategic Studies (IMES), highlighted that such a complex, multi-layered managerial set-up prevented the *Collège* from reaching its full potential in the country.

In a similar vein, the result of an overly rigid bureaucratic structure was that the use of the human resources in this project was less than optimal. As human resources make up by far the greatest input to the project, representing nearly 70% of the total budget, and the quality of the personal was impressive, a disproportionate amount of time of these staff was spent resolving relatively straightforward administrative and logistics issues.

Following the recommendations of the MTR to review the structure of personnel and the role of the subject matter experts, the project was streamlined and more emphasis was placed on supporting the CSS. The *chefs de composante* for procurement, IT and crisis management were reduced, and the end of bilateral activities with Mauritania led to the departure of the expert originally based there. The new framework of CT Sahel, with a general coordinator, a *chef de composante* for the CSS based in Europe, a CSS general coordinator based in Niger and a resident expert based in Mali worked well for the implementation of the remainder of the activities even with their significant upscaling.

3.4. Impact

A reasonable assessment of impact has to be commensurate to the size and scope of the project. The CT Sahel project was not a large project - €8.7 million divided between three countries over a period of 4 years – in a region where the challenges of terrorism and border security in the region are extensive,

and inter-dependent with a number of other factors, including the socio-economic context and regional interdependencies. Furthermore, building sustainable capacity in institutions is a generational endeavour, and it is therefore unreasonable to credibly expect a project of this size – or even one substantially larger – to have a measurable impact on improving security or counter-terrorism capacity.

The national capacity building activities are able to demonstrate a number of individual incidents where CT Sahel trainings resulted directly in an improved capacity for response. This was commensurate to the size of the project and was thus a positive contribution to the region.

The MTR emphasised that the offering of training modules in the initial phase of the project had focused too heavily on pursuit and respond type activities, including fundamental skills in crisis management, investigation and response, which arguably failed to achieve the “specialised counter-terrorism capacity building” envisaged in the project. While this was corrected in the latter half of the project, where the majority of the capacity building activities at the national level were delivered in the area of specialised investigative training (see Figure 2), the capacity for sound analysis and a culture of investigation was described by bilateral security liaisons within EU Member States, as well as EUCAP staff in the region as being broadly lacking.

In Niger and Mali in particular, the national pillar activities appear to have had a positive impact. Despite the fact that the national activities of CT Sahel having terminated a year earlier, they are well remembered and respected by both the national authorities and the international partners.

CT Sahel has clearly done much to positively reinforce the image of the EU in all three countries, and the EU Delegations in all three countries observed that the project paved the way for an enlarged role for the EU in the security sector in the Sahel. When the project was conceived and first initiated, it was the sole intervention of the EU in the security sector in the Sahel. At the point of the final review, each of the national EDFs have projects in the security and justice sector, including with objectives or specific outputs that include reducing the threat of terrorism and/or violent extremism. The region has a CSDP mission explicitly dedicated to reinforcing national capacity to counter-terrorism, and a second CSDP mission where this is an anticipated outcome. It is important, however, that these new activities can fully benefit from CT Sahel and the CSS’ lessons learned.

The CSS has clearly contributed to promoting and enabling regional cooperation, and this is where its impact can most potently be witnessed. Despite the cumbersome and weighty management structure, and the slow rate of delivery, the protracted process of the creation of the CSS was able to build sufficient national ownership of the countries in the region, to the extent that it has become a flagship part of the most recent and ambitious regional cooperation initiative, the G5 Sahel.

During the first half of 2015, the CSS organised four trainings for Mauritania, Mali and Niger, involving 105 participants. Continuing the forward thinking, broad based nature of the latter trainings, in July 2015, a further two modules were approved, namely:

- The threat posed by Boko Haram and its implications for the sub-region – Niamey

- Trans border relationships in the Sahel – Niamey (a call for Chad and Burkina Faso to be in charge of these two last modules was made).

Location	Description	# Participants	Date
Niamey	Money laundering and financing of terrorism	24	20-24 October 2014
Bamako	Terrorist threats to the Sahel	26	26-30 January 2015
Niamey	CT Judicial Framework, investigation techniques and international cooperation	23	02-06 March 2015
Bamako	Rule of Law, Fundamental Human Rights, Citizenship and social communication	21	30 March-6 April 2015
Niamey	The links between drug trafficking and terrorism in the Sahel	22	04-08 May 2015
Nouakchott	Terrorism in the media	21	28 September – 02 October 2015

Figure 4: Training modules delivered by the CSS

As described by participants of CSS trainings, as well as focal points involved in the process, in many ways, the CSS served as an incubator for the G5 Sahel, as it provided a regular venue for sharing of perspectives, concerns and responses. The meetings of the Scientific and Administrative Boards of the CSS allowed for operational, albeit fragile, linkages to be created within strategic counterparts in the national administrations, and this provided a platform for future alignment and strategic dialogue.

3.5. Coherence and Complementarity

The comprehensive response, and ensuring complementarity between security and development initiatives is the *raison d'être* of the Sahel Strategy and its Action Plan. Projects in the security sector, such as CT Sahel, are designed to work within broader measures to counter the growth of violent extremism and promote development such as ensuring sustainable livelihoods, enhancing access to education and other social services, resourced by other EU funding instruments. The CT Sahel project is an integral part of the Sahel Strategy, and has provided a core and specialised focus on counter-terrorism, in complement to the broader criminal justice and rule of law interventions within the EDF. It will be further reinforced by activities funded by other instruments, such as the *“Pilot Project on Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the Sahel-Maghreb”*, implemented by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument, although this will require the establishment of a sound dialogue between the two projects, which has not yet been established.

CT Sahel has also worked in complement to other initiatives funded by the IcSP long-term, for example the Cocaine Route Programme that includes related actions that contribute to the strengthening of the criminal justice and security sector response in the region, and thus in turn also contribute to a more effective framework to counter-terrorism. As such, the CT Sahel project remains coherent and aligned with the broader goals of the EU in the region.

From a broader perspective, within the multiplicity of actors engaged in the security and justice sector in the Sahel, achieving effective coherence and avoiding duplication is no mean feat. The findings of the mapping exercise undertaken during the MTR found that the CT Sahel project was working in an

increasingly crowded space. The mapping exercise, which looked at Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Senegal, plus any regional components, documented 126 individual interventions in the security and justice sectors undertaken by twenty different donors (97 of these were just in Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

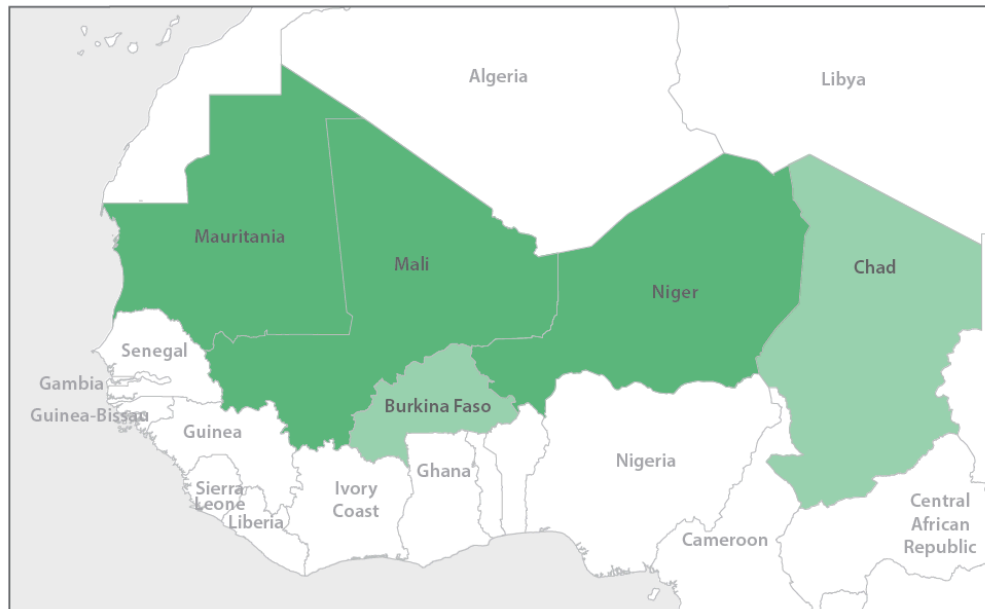


Figure 5: Map of the original CT Sahel countries, expanded to mirror the G5 Sahel (addition of Burkina Faso and Chad)

At a strategic level, the project remained aligned with regional developments and priorities, as the CSS expanded its membership to mirror that of the G5, including Burkina Faso and Chad (as shown in Figure 5, above), and reinforcing the cooperation with the G5 Secretariat.

The project demonstrated capacity to work in collaboration with other actors internal and external to the EU: EUCAP Sahel Niger, the US, France, the United Nations. In Niger, both international and national partners spoke to the positive cooperation that had been achieved with the project, noting a number of high quality joint training initiatives that had been organised at a national level.

The project was also alert to areas in which insufficient support was being provided in the counter-terrorism response. In 2015, the project expanded its activities to include support and engagement with penal authorities. Recognising that prisons in Mali are widely overpopulated, prisons stand on remand for excessively long period, and neither of the two main prisons/detention centres in Bamako is in line with international security and safety standards. More importantly, there is a failure to respond appropriately to the detention of terrorists: inmates are usually gathered in a same space, without any distinction based on their judicial status and can easily communicate with the outside world, which encourages proselytising, radicalisation and recruitment. Realising that support to the penal system in specialised counter-terrorism response was missing from the juridical chain response, CT Sahel focused

on training prison staff/penitentiary officers on crisis management, transfers and law enforcement mostly.

Nonetheless the positive reviews of CT Sahel's performance in its bilateral activities, the argument remains that there is an overwhelming amount of training taking place for the security sector by a variety of actors – EUCAP itself, but also the Americans, the French, the UN, and NGOs financed by a variety of actors. It appears that training is the foremost (knee-jerk) response of the international community to security threats and it has proliferated to extraordinary levels with new initiatives being constantly announced. Yet the level of equipment, basic absorptive capacity of the national counterparts, and the complex interdependencies of security threats remains too low for a significant improvement in response capacity. Such expenses should nonetheless be considered as an investment in building the legitimacy of critical state institutions.

3.6. Sustainability

At the conclusion of the project, the plans for transition and closure of the various components have been developed. The national pillar activities in Mauritania and Niger were terminated in 2014: activities in Mauritania were only limited, and Niger's activities were formally transferred to EUCAP Niger, as per the recommendations in the MTR. For the remaining bilateral activities in Mali, the national partner institutions with which CT Sahel worked have been notified of the project's termination. The projects bilateral activities in Mali are to be transferred to EUCAP Sahel Mali, which has been fully operational since January 2015, and the ptransition has been planned in a seamless way. Some local actors regretted the loss of the specific style of capacity building offered by CT Sahel, which will not be provided by another EU instrument or international organisation. However, other forms of counter-terrorism training are being offered via other international partners and the EU itself, which will ensure that the positive trajectory of capacity development and support will be continued. There was no sense that support from the EU was lacking.

The MTR noted that sustainability would have been better assured had the project conducted more Training of Trainer (TOT) activities. This was responded to in the latter half of the project, though could still have been enhanced still further. In regards to future efforts at capacity building, it would be worth considering identifying partner institutions such as police or judicial training schools, which would better integrate the specialised training efforts within the regular curriculum of officer training. This was done most both in Mali and Niger with positive effect, but the close alignment between the project in Mali and the Police training academy was highly beneficial in building sustainability, and could have been replicated across the other countries covered by the project.

It was observed in the MTR that one risk to the sustainability of the project was the personification of the project in a few individuals: both the Resident Experts of the project, as well as the figureheads of the CSS at national level. With the closure of the national pillars, and the reassignment of the remaining Resident Expert to a regional portfolio, the first issue was mitigated. However, the leadership of the CSS remained heavily invested in one man, General Soumaila, the President of the CSS during Niger's Presidency. Despite the shifting of the Presidency to Mali in October 2014, leadership and promotion of the CSS, particularly within the context of the G5 Sahel, remained with General Soumaila. His untimely

death in September 2015 leaves a serious question on who would continue to advocate for the CSS going forward. While the latest 2015 G5 Sahel Summit seems to have shown encouraging signs of unity and will to assert the sustainability of the *Collège*, translating that into practice will require continued effort and investment, and it remains questionable who would undertake that going forward, particularly after the CIVIPOL project support ceases. This personification jeopardises long-term sustainability and institution building, and would be better avoided in future efforts to sustain and develop national capacity levels.

The decision that the CSS would remain under the administrative supervision of the G5 Sahel, during the G5 Sahel Summit held in N'Djamena, Chad, on 20th November 2015 is a promising indicator for the future of the CSS, and one that could not have been foreseen at the time of the MTR as the G5 Sahel did not exist. A multi-stakeholder review exercise conducted during the MTR exercise identified that the CSS still had potential to evolve as an institution, possibly broadening its functions beyond capacity building to include serving as a platform for strategic cooperation between members, or as a mechanism for coordination with non-state actors. In both of these areas it was identified in the mapping exercise that no such structures existed at the regional level.

Embedding the CSS within the G5 Sahel will ensure that the CSS brand continues, though the form may change as the G5 Sahel evolves and better defines itself. The G5 Sahel is an embryonic initiative, and as such does not have established structures or momentum. Interlocutors in the course of the final review indicated that it is hoped that in fact the CSS would serve to keep the G5 Sahel active and demonstrating value to the membership, which has now officially been decided, as heretofore mentioned. That said, there is a great deal of difference between a commitment on paper, and actually translating that into operational effect.

While it is important and necessary that the CSS is able to play that role in the context of the G5 Sahel, throughout its lifespan the CSS has benefitted from external financing and considerable international support both shaping the agenda, catalysing cooperation and facilitating logistics. This support has allowed the CSS to host one meeting per month in 2015. At the time of the review, with no additional funding from the EU indicated, while the political agreement around transferring the CSS into the G5 Sahel has been settled, the project staff are concluding the project and closing down operations, and this has been communicated to the national focal points for the CSS. In this context, it is highly questionable whether the CSS would be able to sustain momentum and delivery without ongoing international support and funding. The review team would encourage the EU to consider indicating its continued support to the CSS via the G5 Sahel.

3.7. EU Value-Added

It is a comfortable conclusion that the CT Sahel project has positively and significantly added value to the EU in the Sahel, and further, that it has appropriately leveraged the intent and specificities of the IcSP.

Even with delays in implementation, the early deployment of the CT Sahel project in the region with a focus on counter-terrorism and the high-level engagement that was provided in the scoping phase gave

the EU a first-mover advantage in the sector. The national pillars laid the foundation for strong, reciprocal relationships to be built between the national authorities and the EU, and provided tangible support to the creation and promotion of specialized counter-terrorism units in the region. The specialized counter-terrorism unit of the judiciary in Mali, for example, gives credit to CT Sahel for its establishment and credibility as an actor.

According to the EU delegations, CT Sahel's national pillar activities opened doors for the EU to explore cooperation on security aspects, including on both counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, creating room for the EU to engage in this area in the future, and to benefit from more joint actions.

The CSS in particular, and to an extent that could not have been foreseen even during the MTR, has provided a unique value added at a regional level. The CSS provided the EU and its member states a vehicle to engage with a new regional body on a multi-lateral level. The fact that the CSS has been included within the G5 Sahel should be considered as a significant achievement against the original primary objective of the project: to enhance regional cooperation.

The proposal to have the CSS become an institutionalised part of the G5 activities was definitely welcomed by the states in the region and seen to have added value regionally and nationally to the G5 member states. Furthermore, whereas the engagement of Mauritania in the project had always been less than that of the other Sahel countries, Mauritanian support for the G5 Sahel is considerable and the government is keen to see it deliver results. This could create unprecedented levels of buy-in in the CSS and allow it to enhance its results.

To ensure continued value-added within the G5 Sahel, however, it was noted that the CSS still lacks structures and sound-training strategies that fit local needs to tackle terrorism threats on a larger scale. The armed security sector requires long-term and continuous training, and the CSS could contribute to this. Such trainings are seen as highly relevant and the broad spectrum of CSS trainings (security, justice, media, civil society) is seen as a positive aspect. It was advised that to achieve this, future CSS trainings should be shorter and could be expanded to also include higher level staff, while maintaining its current targets among intermediary levels, with a better follow up to ensure that the results can be filtered down.

Finally, while it is unlikely that additional countries will be invited to join the G5 Sahel as permanent members, it is clear that CT actions cannot be successful if restricted to the G5 Sahel countries only. Within the new framework, the CSS needs to retain the capacity to work jointly with neighbouring countries, such as Algeria, Morocco and Senegal, which could be granted observer status and invited to participate in relevant sessions upon invitation.

4. Lessons Learned and Considerations for Future Interventions

The review team has identified the following lessons learned that would be relevant for future EU programming in counter terrorism both in the Sahel and elsewhere:

4.1. Ensure formulation exercises are commensurate to the size of the proposed project

The MTR observed that the scoping and formulation period of the CT Sahel, which consisted of 7 high-level visits over a two-year period, raised expectations far higher than the ultimately quite small project was able to meet. While this is perhaps excusable in a project that was the first intervention of its type for the EU globally, for future CT interventions such a protracted formulation process would best be avoided, and the process of defining the project should be commensurate to the size of the planned project itself.

4.2. Recognise the ownership / implementation trade off

The model chosen for the CSS emphasised that this was intended to be a nationally owned and led process, with the international team providing support. This is, in part, why the CSS took such a long time to deliver results. Certainly a different process managed predominantly by external actors, could have scaled up and implemented quicker than the CSS, but it arguably may not have achieved the same level of buy-in, which then permitted the CSS to become fully owned and embedded in the regional coordination body of the G5 Sahel.

Both models have value, and this recommendation is not to recommend one model over the other, but merely to recognise that if the objective is to promote national ownership and a nationally lead process, particularly in the context of weak and fragile states, expectations about the speed at which delivery can be delivered should be tempered accordingly.

Furthermore, in this regard, selecting models appropriate to the level of capacity is an important consideration. The CSS was designed to parallel the European Police College (CEPOL) structure, which was arguably overly sophisticated for the level of cooperation and capacity demonstrated by West African and Sahelian states. This further slowed the capacity of the CSS to implement and add value. If the CSS is to be continued to be supported by the EU within the G5, this should be a careful consideration.

4.3. Ensure relevance of training and capacity building related to realities and developments on the ground

Since the threats in the region are dynamic and respond to interventions from different actors, the realities on the ground are subject to change. These changing realities should be taken into account when capacity building is designed. Also there is a need to understand the attractiveness of criminal activities (including political violence) in different environments to develop the correct responses that address the real causes. Some form of connectivity between an analysis unit (within in G5 to be) and the

future activities in the CSS framework will help to modulate the right activities that address the real concerns.

4.4. Build sustainability considerations into project design

In project design, greater emphasis on measuring impact and building mechanisms to ensure post training follow up is necessary. Where training activities may impact the knowledge of participants there is not always a guarantee that the knowledge gained will have an effect in the `on the job` realities. Procedures and mechanisms for this post training follow-up should be developed. The review team found that there was insufficient attention paid to examining, recording and disseminating evidence about the impact of the project. Metrics focused on “how many” rather than the outcome. It was noted that CT Sahel did not include SMART indicators, or indicators for human rights compliance which was a priority of the project, and a proper feedback loop by which evaluations by project beneficiaries could be used to reinforce the quality of delivery and the prioritisation process was not formally built into the programme management cycle.

Furthermore, in all capacity building endeavours for institutions, recognising that these are inevitably long-term projects, a more sustainable model would be to focus on Training of Trainers (TOT), working with national training institutes and building in mechanisms or financing by which the regional trainings can be translated into national structures and vice-versa. Whether this is effective and sustainable in the in long term, however, will always depend on the will and execution of the national beneficiaries.

4.5. Plan early, communicate clearly

As a project nears its conclusion, questions around whether or not the EU will continue to provide support for the CSS have remained open-ended. While the implementing agency has had no option but to plan for the project’s closure, at the same time the overarching political process with the G5 Sahel has indicated its desire to have its continuation – a result that the EU would welcome. A hiatus in funding and support may risk losing the momentum that the CSS has finally gathered - delivering 8+, well-appreciated trainings per year.

A swifter confirmation of funding to support ongoing efforts and guidance on the way forward would be beneficial. At present there is no clarity about the timetable or the occupancy of the driver’s seat in the process of defining the future for CSS in terms of structure, governance and mission. This will hinder the future of CSS beyond December 2015, and the slow process of funding approval jeopardises the EU being seen as committed to the CSS and the G5 Sahel. The review team heard, for example, that other donors including the UN were being asked to fund the CSS beyond 2015. This could result in the EU losing the leverage and ownership it has garnered through the four years of support to project.

In future, therefore, considerations over whether projects will be continued or terminated would be better taken earlier in the concluding cycle of the project, and clearly communicated to all stakeholders to allow appropriate transition plans to be put into place.

4.6. Promote CVE initiatives over CT

One of the key takeaways from the strategic review process that has been undertaken for this project is the extent of the challenge in genuinely building capacity to counter-terrorism from an operational

perspective, given the weakness of state institutions, the porosity of the region's borders, and the degree to which socio-economic considerations undermine state-building and development. In this context, isolated security sector approaches are challenged to have impact.

Given these dynamics, and coupled with the fact that the EU is by far the largest development donor in the region, perhaps a sharpened focus at countering violent extremism both through direct programming and through the other development instruments at a national and regional level, would provide a more substantial return on investment.

The selection of thematic issues prioritized for discussion (e.g. civil society engagement, cross-border communities, Boko Haram) and perspectives expressed by the national beneficiaries in the Sahel countries indicate that this would also be aligned with their concerns, given the efforts to counter growing fundamentalism and radicalisation in their countries. Even the choice of more technical and operational subjects proposed within the CSS, for example money laundering and organised crime, suggest a more sophisticated understanding of terrorism responses, highlighting the need for enablers of terrorism to be addressed.

For future engagements in the Sahel, the EU could consider reinforcing CVE programming, sensitising both security institutions and communities towards the risks and costs of organised crime and terrorism, addressing the challenges of border communities within a regional framework, and building community resilience to the twin threats. Across the funding instruments, projects could be better orientated to support CVE objectives, for example providing sustainable livelihoods in vulnerable regions, and supporting efforts to reinforce government service delivery in those regions where state presence is weakest, and promoting dialogue and adding value to those populations that have been traditionally underserved.

4.7. Ensure consistency in priorities

National authorities in the region emphasised their willingness and support to partner with the EU and its member states in the fight against terrorism. It was observed quite widely, however, that this is not a short term endeavour, and that the international community needs to continue to commit both political emphasis and financing to the region if a sustainable response is to be found. Emerging new priorities – such as addressing clandestine migration and human smuggling – can provide a diversion from this long-term effort, and requires a reprioritisation of resources by the national governments which might compromise their capacity to deliver on other goals, including development.