

# EEAS Mediation Support Pilot Project

## Evaluatory Review

FWC COM 2011 – Lot 1  
Request no. EEAS.K2.002

31 December 2012

<b>To:</b>	Johannes Schachinger Guy Banim Sylvain Tarreau Mediation Support Team, K2-EEAS
<b>From (Consultants)</b>	Andrew Sherriff (ECDPM) (team leader) <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:as@ecdpm.org">as@ecdpm.org</a> Volker Hauck (ECDPM) <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:vh@ecdpm.org">vh@ecdpm.org</a>
<b>Cc:</b>	Mike Gutteridge – Cardno on behalf of AETS Consortium <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:Mike.Gutteridge@cardno.uk.com">Mike.Gutteridge@cardno.uk.com</a>
<b>Date of Submission</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> January 2013
<b>Date of requested feedback on this version</b>	
<b>This Version</b>	Final

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Acronyms.....	iii
Executive Summary.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Purpose of the assignment .....	1
1.2. Methodology.....	1
2. The Pilot Project .....	3
2.1. Background .....	3
2.2. Objectives and intervention logic of the pilot project.....	5
2.3. Initiation and implementation of the pilot project.....	8
3. Assessment.....	16
3.1. Introduction .....	16
3.2. Relevance .....	16
3.3. Efficiency.....	18
3.4. Intermediate outcomes (impact).....	19
3.5. Added value .....	20
3.6. Complementarity .....	21
3.7. Sustainability .....	22
3.8. Effectiveness.....	23
3.9. Summing up.....	26
4. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations .....	30
4.1. Key findings and conclusions.....	30
4.2. Recommendations .....	37

## List of Boxes

Box 1: Definitions of Mediation and Dialogue.....	4
Box 2: Tracks and levels in Mediation and Dialogue .....	4
Box 3: Intervention logic .....	6
Box 4: A brief stocktake of coaching/training sessions.....	12
Box 5: Lessons learnt from a coaching session in Nigeria .....	25
Box 6: Pointers from the e-survey .....	26

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Intervention Logic .....	7
------------------------------------	---

## List of Tables

Table 1: Coaching/ training sessions implemented .....	11
--	----

## Acknowledgements

This document was compiled by Volker Hauck (Head of Conflict, Security and Resilience, ECDPM) with valuable comments received by his colleagues Andrew Sherriff (Head of Programme EU External Action, ECDPM) and James Mackie (Senior Advisor EU Development Policy, ECDPM). Thanks go also to Camilla Rocca (Research Assistant for the Conflict, Security and Resilience Programme, ECDPM) for her inputs to this document.

This evaluatory review is based on a desk study of material made available by the Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division of the EEAS, an electronic survey that was sent to 50 staff working at EEAS headquarters and EU Delegations and interviews with 28 persons that we have conducted in person and by phone during September and December 2012. The list of interviewees is compiled in Annex 5.

The evaluatory review made also use of the first draft *Study on EU lessons learnt in mediation and dialogue* and the interviews conducted for this study by Andrew Sherriff and Camilla Rocca.

We would like to thank all interviewees and respondents to the survey for their time in responding to the questions. We would like to thank in particular Sylvain Tarreau and Guy Banim for accompanying our work effectively throughout the entire period.

Comments, corrections and feedback on this draft document should be addressed to Volker Hauck.

## Acronyms

APF	African Peace Facility
AU	African Union
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
DG-DEVCO	Directorate General of Development and Cooperation
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EP	European Parliament
ERM	Emergency Response Mechanism
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
FPI	Foreign Policy Instruments Service
IfS	Instrument for Stability
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSPP	Mediation Support Pilot Project
MST	Mediation Support Team
MSU	Mediation Support Unit (UN)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAMF	Policy Advice Mediation Facility
SADC	Southern African Development Community
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## Executive Summary

**Purpose:** This document reviews the implementation of the EEAS Mediation Support Pilot Project (MSPP) that was implemented by the Mediation Support Team (MST) of the Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division (K2) of the European External Action Service (EEAS).<sup>1</sup> The Terms of Reference for this request were formulated by K2. The evaluation has the character of an *evaluatory review* in view of the on-going implementation of the MSPP and the wish of the K2/MST to feed lessons learnt and recommendations into current work.

The evaluation was requested in the “Remarks” that accompanied the “*Other Operating Expenditures*” in Chapter 22 of Section X of the 2012 EU General Budget<sup>2</sup> for the setting up of the MST for the EEAS: “*The preparatory action should be seen as a first step in strengthening and providing sustainable support for mediation initiatives by first increasing the Union’s internal capabilities without excluding support in the form of external and contractual expertise. The action should be followed by an evaluation, a reflection process and, possibly, decisions on formally establishing an MST within the EEAS.*”

The MSPP was set up with the overall aim of strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities. More specifically, the project should help the EEAS to address the strategic and horizontal aspects of mediation in the context of EU external action, provide administrative credits to support mediation activities, set up training opportunities, build up expertise and an institutional memory on mediation, support internal EU capacity development through knowledge management, and undertake outreach and cooperation with actors outside the EU institutions.

**Overall policy context:** The *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities*, adopted by the Council of the European Union (15779/09, 10 November 2009)<sup>3</sup> sets out the overall rationale that guided the inclusion in the EEAS budget of an MSPP. Strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities is considered important as it will help the EU to follow up and implement the *European Security Strategy* (ESS) of 2003 and the SG/HR’s *2008 Report on the Implementation of the ESS* that underline the relevance of “preventive engagement” (ESS, 2003) and the need “to expand (the EU’s) dialogue and mediation capacities” (SG/HR, 2008). This is in line with the broader EU engagement in the area of conflict prevention set out in the Goteborg Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts of 2001 and the *European Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention* of 2001. More recently, the *Council Conclusion on Conflict Prevention* (20 June 2011)<sup>4</sup> invited the High Representative and the Commission to build on the *Concept (2009)* and to strengthen mediation capacities through providing support and training to mediators and their staff.

The *Concept (2009)* was formulated with the aim of developing a more systematic approach to mediation and dialogue, of clarifying the role to be undertaken by the EU in mediation and of setting out a wider understanding of mediation and dialogue that comprises track 1, track 2 and track 3 activities and supported through a full range of civilian and military management instruments as well as trade and development tools available to the EU. Mediation is seen as one of several approaches to engaging in conflict prevention, transformation and resolution and is closely linked to early warning and conflict assessment. It can take place at different levels – national, sub-regional and local – and is most effective if

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, the team will use the acronym ‘K2’ throughout this document. Where staff from K2 and the MST were involved in particular activities or discussions, the term “K2/MST” will be used.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Official Journal of the European Union, 29.02.2012, EU General Budget, Section X – European External Action Service. I/544 – hereafter called the “2012 EU General Budget”

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter referred to as “Concept (2009)”.

<sup>4</sup> Hereafter referred to as “Council Conclusion (2011)”

the different levels can be linked with each other. As such, mediation here is conceptualised widely and goes against a perception of mediation as only occurring at track 1, whereby political leaders and eminent persons meet in search of lasting solutions. This misperception of the term “mediation” is also common within the EEAS.

***Methodology:*** In the absence of any specific EEAS guidance on how to undertake evaluations, the mission used the full EC evaluation criteria – which incorporate the five criteria of the OECD-DAC – as the point of reference for developing the methodology for this evaluatory review. The objectives of the MSPP and the intervention logic developed by the team from existing documents were interrogated through (i) a desk study of the project documents, EU policy documents, review studies, evaluations and literature that have informed the conceptual underpinnings of the MSPP; (ii) 28 interviews with EU staff and stakeholders not linked to any EU institution; (iii) an electronic questionnaire sent to 50 staff working in EU Delegations; and (iv) intermediate exchanges with K2/MST to stimulate internal thinking and reflection on the project.

***Objectives to be assessed:*** To ensure a thorough assessment of the progress made, the evaluation team formulated the following overall objective and six specific sub-objectives, derived from the “Remarks” in Item 228 of Section X of the 2012 EU General Budget:

The MSPP has the overall objective *to initiate the strengthening of internal EU mediation and dialogue capacities with a view to gradually addressing conflict prevention and peacebuilding more effectively*. This overall objective is realised through the following six specific sub-objectives:

1. *To provide administrative and operational support to managing the execution of the pilot project, including the mobilisation of mediators/experts for mediation, dialogue and coaching assignments;*
2. *To organise over the period 2011-2012 a number of training courses in mediation and dialogue-related tasks for EEAS staff at headquarters and EU staff personnel deployed in missions;*
3. *To build up a body of knowledge on mediation and dialogue-related activities, for example through (i) the preparation of a series of factsheets with best practices on mediation and dialogue methodology, (ii) a study on lessons learnt from EU engagement with mediation and dialogue-related tasks, and (iii) the compilation of (short) background studies on situations of conflict and fragility;*
4. *To establish a roster of deployable experts with experience in mediation and dialogue processes in i) coaching EEAS headquarters staff as well as EU staff personnel deployed in missions, and ii) undertaking (short) studies or reviews;*
5. *To provide advisory services and strategic as well as operational guidance on mediation and dialogue horizontally throughout the EEAS headquarters and to EU Delegations, including the development of guidelines that can be used during missions, training courses, coaching, meetings and other outreach activities;*
6. *To set up contacts and build up networks with international partners, with relevant NGOs and with other EU institutions to establish opportunities for cooperation in the field of mediation and other forms of preventive engagement.*

***Assessment:*** The following assessment summarises the analysis of the data along the seven evaluation dimensions, mentioned above.

***Relevance:*** The MSPP fulfils a relevant role. The actions executed through the MSPP are overall in line with the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusion (2011)* and the requests of the budgetary authorities, as listed in the EU 2012 budget. While the programme is small and unable to reach a level of operation capable of transforming wider thinking and action with regard to mediation and conflict prevention across

the entire EEAS and all EU Delegations, it has shown – considering the shortness of its implementation – value as an internal service provider and knowledge hub as well as a catalyst for gradual change on how mediation is looked at and dealt with. The latter was considered particularly relevant, as there are widespread misperceptions and misunderstandings among EEAS and EU Delegation staff of the role mediation can play as an element of wider conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches. Respondents also underlined the potential future relevance of the MST to the wider strengthening of internal EU mediation capacities. Viewed from a distance, the gradual change that the MSPP was able to mobilise may not be apparent given the limited scope and field of action within which the MSPP can perform; however a closer examination tells a different story and those who have been in contact with K2/MSPP generally confirm this picture.

**Effectiveness:** K2/MSPP staff proceeded efficiently and pragmatically in setting up this project. Given the institutional unpreparedness of the EEAS to implement such a project and the various management issues that had to be solved within the house (including the mobilisation of additional human resources, the need to obtain permission to authorise funds and the establishment of financial control mechanisms), the project got off the ground relatively quickly. Staff made use of personal contacts and of arising opportunities to advertise the services that the MST could provide among colleagues within the EEAS. In addition the MST reached out to colleagues at the UN and to other EU institutions. However, the capacities of the MST were too limited to systematically connect to all Divisions of the EEAS, to respond to the various genuine demands from EU Delegations (in particular those from Latin America) or to provide advisory services to colleagues in DG DEVCO where interviewees identified an urgent need to provide advice on mediation and political dialogue, in particular to geo-desks.

**Intermediate outcomes (impact):** Given the shortness of the pilot project, the extent to which the EEAS' internal capacities to purposefully engage in mediation and dialogue have been strengthened cannot really be determined. However, the evaluatory review could detect some “traces of evidence” of the effect the MSPP has had on the EEAS. At the operational level, the delivery of coaching sessions and the provision of advisory services led to demand for more inputs among both EU Delegations and senior ranks within the EEAS. At the institutional level, there are signs of growing ownership in support of mediation and dialogue as instruments for external action, such as on-going discussions concerning the establishment of a mechanism through which mediation can be better supported operationally through Instrument for Stability (IfS) funding. This gradual enhancement of ownership was one of the concepts based on which the budgetary authorities financed the MSPP.

**Added value:** An assessment of whether the MSPP could add value to what EU Member States, international organisations and other external actors are undertaking in relation to mediation and dialogue activities was beyond the scope of this evaluatory review. From interviews and responses to the electronic survey there appears to be broad agreement that the MST, being placed within the EEAS, is exposed to work processes, has access to information and contacts, and has the capacity to provide services within the institution that an outsourced service (e.g. an NGO) could not utilise or, in the case of service provision, could not achieve to the level of an internal facility. Going beyond the scope of this evaluatory review, several respondents raised questions as to the added value of the EU as an international actor in mediation. The desire was expressed to more precisely clarify where the EU sees its added value, geographically as well as practically, vis-à-vis the work of other partners engaged in mediation and dialogue. There was also a call to critically review the role the EU should play in the area of mediation vis-à-vis the UN in light of the support it provides to the UN.

**Complementarity:** The MST took into account complementary activities on mediation and dialogue executed by the UN and paid particular attention to the EU's relationship with the UN against an overall changing context in which the EU's role has evolved from funder to partner in the area of mediation. Regular contacts at work floor level have helped to clarify operational questions arising in selected crisis countries, although questions remain as to the EU's relative limited use of the UN's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) standby team that should be further investigated. The MST has so far paid little attention to the complementarity of its action with that of EU Member States (EU-MS) as this would have gone beyond the scope and resources of the MSPP; however there is agreement that effort should be made in the future to more extensively consider the different approaches and activities undertaken by EU Member States.

**Sustainability:** The envisaged integration of the MST's budget into the regular budget of the EEAS provides for a longer-term perspective regarding the strengthening of EU mediation and dialogue capabilities and sends the signal that the EEAS has adopted greater ownership of mediation as an instrument for engagement in conflict prevention. In terms of operations, the type of activities that the MST has performed should be continued, although efforts should be made to more closely link the coaching sessions provided to EU Delegations with the operations of on-going EU-led or EU-supported mediation and dialogue processes. The creation of knowledge products should be continued insofar as such products deal with EU-specific topics. The MST should be aware of the future costs of maintaining a knowledge database and should make use of already existing (UN-maintained) databases to the extent possible.

**Effectiveness:** In view of the short period of the MSPP, and the relatively few activities, outputs and outcomes that can be looked at, the dataset underpinning this assessment is limited. The evaluation team could distil five "take-home observations" concerning the effectiveness of the MSPP:

Firstly, activities aiming to strengthen EU mediation and dialogue capacities are overall on track, have been well achieved and are in line with the spirit of the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)*. There are several "traces of evidence" indicating that the activities undertaken and supported by the MST are of an added value and have responded to the remarks in the 2012 EU budget that formed the overall objectives for the MSPP. Secondly, while the MST was able to reach out to a number of staff in EEAS headquarters and to EU Delegations via intense networking and a generally good level of internal communication, the project was too small to bring benefits to all concerned EEAS divisions, all EU Delegations that have requested inputs, the Commission, and DG DEVCO. Thirdly, regular networking and cooperation with non-EU institutional actors, i.e. the UN, EU-MS and NGOs, can enhance effectiveness as long as it is i) embedded in a strategic approach pursued by K2/MST and ii) well coordinated and supported by staff in the EEAS and EU Delegations who are dealing with the operational side of mediation and dialogue. Fourthly, K2/MST pursued the aims of the MSPP organically which was the best approach to follow given the context of institutional unpreparedness in which the project had to be implemented. This carried the risk of the MST becoming side-tracked by requests that were both too numerous and too varied, and was challenging to manage coherently given the MST's limited experience. Fifthly, appreciation for MSPP-supported activities was highest where the MST could establish effective connections with EU operations supporting or leading on mediation and dialogue. This is not always an easy task given the limitations imposed by working with administrative credits. Effectiveness also increases parallel to the level of interaction and preparation between the MST, the EU Delegations, geo-desks at headquarters and other partners involved, such as consultants and NGOs.

These observations are supported by the results of the e-survey that the evaluation team conducted among 50 senior officials working in EU Delegations and at headquarters (though it should be noted that it is not possible to draw firm conclusions based on this limited dataset). From the 13 replies received, almost

90% of respondents agreed on the added value of K2/MST as an in-house service provider when compared to international agencies, Member State capacity or NGOs. Almost 80% assessed the level of coordination between K2/MST, geo-desks and EU Delegations as 'good'. More than 60% of respondents confirmed that inputs provided by K2/MST had helped to enhance the quality of their on-going work. All respondents agreed on the strategic importance of mediation in EU external action and would recommend the work of K2/MST to their colleagues.

**Key findings:** Drawing on the above assessment, the evaluation team extracted eight key findings.

***Limited ownership of Council orientations and institutional unpreparedness to deal with mediation required considerable investments by the MST.*** The MST did well to invest considerable time and energy in tackling the limited institutional awareness within the EEAS of mediation as one of several mechanisms to deal with conflict. The MST also had to address limited ownership among EEAS operational staff of the political orientation of the Council on mediation. These limitations reduced the effectiveness of the MST's work to some extent but could be overcome by targeting its work successfully to a limited number of geo-desks and divisions. This approach helped to gradually create awareness of the added value of the MST in some quarters of the EEAS, including the leadership of the organisation.

***The MST is a useful complementary instrument to pursuing mediation and conflict prevention within the EU but its potential is not always understood.*** Responses from interviews and to the e-survey underline the importance and added value that internal as well as external stakeholders attribute to the existence of the MST and its service within the EEAS in terms of strengthening mediation capacities. The quality of the MST's work and its approach are overall well appreciated. To be an effective service provider, however, the MST needs to better understand the work and needs of staff dealing with conflict prevention in particular countries or regions. Equally, staff at geo-desks or EU Delegations need to be given the opportunity and time to learn about the MST and the added value that this facility can bring to their work. This matching of demand and supply took place successfully in a number of cases but could not be achieved at a pan-institutional level given both the brevity of the MSPP and the limited resources available to the MST.

***The MST contributes to creating strengthened expertise on mediation within the EEAS and EU Delegations, but not yet across all EU institutions.*** The MSPP was set up with the intention of being a first step toward an increase in the Union's internal capacities to deal with mediation, which can be considered to have been well achieved given the short time within which the programme could act and the limited resources it had at its disposal. The evaluatory review could find "traces of evidence", as they are referred to in the review, showing that expertise on mediation has been strengthened among staff working in certain divisions of the EEAS as well as in selected EU Delegations. However, K2/MST had insufficient operational capacity to reach out more widely to other EU institutions. Respondents underlined the need to do this more systematically in the follow-up to the present MSPP and to include in particular the geo-desks in DG DEVCO who are involved with instruments that can fund mediation.

***Strengthening expertise on mediation and dialogue is most effective when linked to operational activities.*** Feedback from interviews and coaching sessions indicates that the services offered by the MST are considered most effective when linked to the operational realities and processes of a division, a geo-desk or a desk at the EU Delegation. Experience in implementing the MSPP shows that this can be a challenge, as the administrative credits the MST is mandated to use are meant solely to benefit the functioning of the EU institution and not that of the partners and processes with which EU staff are involved. This requires the MST to coordinate with colleagues and to search for complementary funding

mechanisms that can bridge the gap between services in internal capacity strengthening and operational activities on mediation supported or led by the EU. Where such funding cannot be found in time, the effectiveness of MST support risks becoming reduced.

***Requests from political leadership need to be balanced with those at operational level.*** The more the services of the MST become known and requested, the more the MST must manage demand from different levels of the EEAS as well as from EU Delegations. Given the mandate of the MST to develop both knowledge and institutional capacity to deal with mediation, this is not easy to manage and creates a certain dilemma given the existence of both bottom-up requests to deal with concrete operational issues, and requests from the leadership of the EEAS to deal with highly visible crisis situations which the organisation has to prioritise. While the MST has dealt with this pragmatically so far, it may find it difficult in the near future to balance the increase in demand that is likely to emerge from all sides.

***Misunderstandings about the concept of mediation and the role of the MST in pursuing mediation and dialogue need to be managed.*** The MST was able to continuously and satisfactorily respond to the considerable misunderstandings it encountered within EU institutions of the concept of mediation and the role that mediation can play within a wider conflict prevention approach. Equally, the MST had to manage unrealistic expectations from staff to assist on a more elaborate scale than was possible. In the absence of specific briefing packages on mediation and on the role of the MST in strengthening mediation capacity, as well as of a set of concise knowledge products (which was not possible to produce in its entirety given the brevity of the MSPP), K2/MST had to invest considerable time in communication and in clarifying its role and mandate during numerous meetings, informal exchanges and advisory talks with staff.

***It is too early to judge the relevance of all MST services and activities.*** The provision of a diverse range of services by the MST can be effective as long as these are provided at the “right moment”, with the “right type of expertise and quality”, in the “right form”, addressed to the “right audience” and with the “right understanding of the issues at hand.” The MST is still on a learning curve toward meeting these ambitious goals, although the evaluatory review could find “traces of evidence” that the provision of coaching sessions and internal advice (in different forms) scored very well among respondents and interviewees as long as it could be linked to the operational realities of EU staff. However the review comes too early in the history of the MST’s work to assess the relevance of generating knowledge products and of having access to technical expertise to strengthen EEAS capacities on mediation. Another important finding was the importance attributed by the “clients” of the MST to the provision of expertise on mediation, which should be combined with advice and knowledge on the various EU funding instruments that can be used in supporting mediation and how they function.

***Working in partnership with actors outside the EEAS and EU Delegations pays off but needs to be nurtured continuously.*** In conclusion, given the brevity of the implementation period and the limited resources available to the MSPP, the MST allocated satisfactory time to networking with outside partners and cooperation with the UN, although much more will need to be done in the future before effective and lasting synergies to strengthen mediation capacities can be created. Exchanges with the UN and other outreach activities in which outside stakeholders were involved were rated positively in interviews, though there are concerns about the limited deployment of expertise on part of the UN-MSU’s standby team that should be investigated. Effectiveness will also grow if linkages and knowledge networks can be established on conflict prevention issues in which staff from other EU institutions as well as EU-MS can be involved; this is an issue that the MST is planning to address in the near future.

**Recommendations:** EEAS/K2 will further pursue the activities initiated during the MSPP. There are plans to integrate the work of the MST into the regular budget of the EEAS/K2 as of January 2013. A total of € 500,000 is earmarked for capacity-strengthening activities in relation to mediation and dialogue plus funds to pay the salaries of the contract agents; although it is not certain whether this sum will indeed become available to K2 in view of overall EU budget cuts. The following recommendations assume that K2 will be in a position to follow up on the MSPP and emphasise the issues that the MST should take into account as of 2013.

**Recommendation 1:** K2/MST should discuss, with the higher ranks of the EEAS, possibilities to provide further operational guidance and information on i) the various steps the institution is taking to translate the existing political orientation on strengthening mediation capacities, as manifested in the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)*, into operations and ii) how the EEAS intends to further pursue mediation within wider conflict prevention efforts in external action.

**Recommendation 2:** K2/MST has overall been successful in pursuing mediation and conflict prevention within the EEAS by following an organic and learning-by-doing approach whereby opportunities were used to communicate and discuss the relevance of the topic during a series of meetings and informal contacts at various levels. This approach of working more horizontally and complementarily to other units of the EEAS should be continued, although it is important to ensure that the MST does not become too deeply drawn into a particular country dossier that should rather be the responsibility of a geo-desk officer or staff at an EU Delegation.

**Recommendation 3:** K2/MST should extend its reach to all EU institutions dealing with conflict prevention, with a particular focus on the desk officers at DG DEVCO and the Foreign Policy Instruments Service (FPI) who are involved with instruments that can fund mediation more systematically.

**Recommendation 4:** i) To enhance effectiveness, the MST should consider, from the outset of a service provision, the various options as regards how a capacity-strengthening activity initiated by the MST can be linked with both follow-up, and with on-going mediation-related activities funded through other instruments; ii) For capacity strengthening activities that could be interpreted as “operational”, but that benefit the functioning of the EU institution, K2/MST should make efforts to clarify the limit of its mandate in support of mediation capacities and the type of activities it can still fund through the use of administrative credits only.

**Recommendation 5:** It can be expected that K2/MST will be confronted with a range of requests from different levels and areas of the EEAS and EU Delegations that is difficult to respond to in its entirety. Identifying a solution to the dilemma of prioritisation should be guided via a response to the question: “Which activities will help to create greater institutional ownership of the topic in order that mediation and other conflict prevention mechanisms become more systematically and strategically used in EU external action?”

**Recommendation 6:** In view of a widespread misunderstanding of the concept of mediation and how it can be used strategically as one element of a package of conflict prevention measures, K2/MST should invest further time and resources in the promotion of internal communication that goes beyond participation in meetings and engagement through (informal) advisory exchanges with staff.

**Recommendation 7:** i) K2/MST should, in principle, continue with the range of services it provides but should place more emphasis on understanding the full conflict prevention process of a particular country or regional context, in order that its services can effectively respond to both operational realities and the

requests of its “clients”. However, the MST should avoid duplication and should not offer services that can be mobilised through other sources. This requires the MST to be fully aware of the quality and range of services, including knowledge products, that are currently on the market; ii) The MST should look into options to further streamline the management of its financial, administrative and legal infrastructure with a view to reducing transaction costs.

**Recommendation 8:** The MST should build on its contacts, experiences and working relationships with the UN, EU-MS and NGOs in order to intensify cooperation on areas that could not be addressed so far or did not function to their full potential. Given the limited operational capacity of the MST, existing plans to set up and moderate a community of practice on mediation, which could include various stakeholders through knowledge networking, exchange and sharing, should be pursued.

**Final observations – moving from a pilot project to an established MST:** Following a year of implementation, there is benefit to be had in reflecting from a “bird’s-eye view” on experiences so far and on how to move ahead. Taking the results of the evaluatory review into account, the review team would recommend discussing a slight adaptation to the approach that the MST has taken so far and formulating this in a brief strategic work plan that can be shared with others and which defines the particular role of the MST. Building on positive MST experience, this slight adaptation would be for the MST to engage somewhat less in the concrete work of geo-desks and EU Delegations and to move further into the role of a knowledge facilitator and broker. The MST would thus be able to define its role as a connector of different stakeholders vertically and horizontally with the EU institutions as well as with outside stakeholders; as a convener of exchanges at the interface of the internal capacity strengthening of mediation and the operational aspects of the EU’s engagement in this area; as a resource for strategic expertise and a provider of relevant knowledge on mediation; and as an actor that can pro-actively contribute to the ongoing work of staff at headquarters and EU Delegations and provide suggestions on how to enhance the quality of the work involved.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of the assignment

This report deals with the third objective of the attached Terms of Reference (ToR) (Annex 1) that request the “*provision of an overall evaluation of the Mediation Support Pilot Project (MSPP) that points out (a) the ability of the Mediation Support Team (MST) to manage the allocated funds and (b) its impact on the access of the European External Action Service (EEAS) to expertise on mediation.*” The evaluation will have the character of an *evaluatory review* in line with the proposal formulated by the evaluation team after a joint meeting with the MST on 16 July 2012 (see Annex 2).

The overall purpose of this evaluatory review is to respond to the remarks that accompanied the “*Other Operating Expenditures*” in Chapter 22 of Section X of the 2012 EU General Budget<sup>5</sup> for the setting up of an EU Mediation Support Team (MST) for the European External Action Service: “*The preparatory action should be seen as a first step in strengthening and providing sustainable support for mediation initiatives by first increasing the Union’s internal capabilities without excluding support in the form of external and contractual expertise. The action should be followed by an evaluation, a reflection process and, possibly, decisions on formally establishing an MST within the EEAS.*”

The orientations set out in the 2012 EU General Budget were implemented through a pilot project that was embedded in the Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division (K2) of the EEAS.<sup>6</sup> The pilot project was set up with the overall aim of strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities and is a unique experience in the short history of the EEAS. More specifically, the project should help the EEAS to address the strategic and horizontal aspects of mediation in the context of EU external action, provide administrative credits to support mediation activities, set up training opportunities, build up expertise and an institutional memory on mediation, support internal EU capacity development through knowledge management, and undertake outreach and cooperation with actors outside the EU institutions.

The review was commissioned by K2 with the aim of analysing the experience gained in setting up and implementing the MSPP to date. It is understood that the review will assess neither the rationale for strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities as formulated in the *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities*, adopted by the Council of the European Union (15779/09, 10 November 2009) nor the political orientation and guidance given by the EEAS leadership to the MST during the implementation of the pilot project.

## 1.2. Methodology

In the absence of any specific EEAS guidance on how to undertake evaluations, the mission used the full EC evaluation criteria – which incorporate the five criteria of the OECD-DAC – as the point of reference for developing the methodology for this evaluatory review. Due to the limited time available for implementing this pilot project and hence the limited amount of experience, outputs and possible outcomes that the evaluation team could usefully assess, the team could not investigate in detail each of these criteria. However, the criteria have been useful in mapping complementary views, opinions and ideas concerning

<sup>5</sup> Source: Official Journal of the European Union, 29.02.2012, EU General Budget, Section X – European External Action Service. I/544 – hereafter called the “2012 EU General Budget”

<sup>6</sup> For the sake of simplicity, the team will use the acronym ‘K2’ throughout this document. Where staff from K2 and the MST were involved in particular activities or discussions, the term “K2/MST” will be used.

the future focus of a formally established MST, in addition to assessing the experiences and results that the pilot project has gathered and achieved so far.

The criteria used, what has been assessed, and the key questions that guided the interrogation for the respective criteria are summarised in Annex 3.

The objectives of the MSPP and the intervention logic developed by the team from existing documents (see Section 2.2) were interrogated through the following methodological means:

*Desk study:*

- Review of project documentation (including preparatory documents, financial information, regulations, planning documents, internal e-mail exchanges, procurement, etc.);
- Review of coaching mission reports and evaluation forms from coaching sessions
- Review of EU policy documents;
- Review of studies, evaluations and literature that have informed the conceptual underpinnings of the MSPP.

*Interviews:*

- 25 interviews in person and 3 interviews by phone were held with different stakeholders involved in the MSPP and other EU mediation and dialogue experiences, covering EEAS headquarters staff, staff of other EU institutions (in particular the Directorate-General of Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO), the Foreign Policy Instruments Service (FPI) and the Council Secretariat), UN partners, EU Member State representatives, NGO representatives, and consultants/individual experts (see Annex 5). Interviewees from outside EU institutions were identified by the evaluation team; most interviewees from within EU institutions were proposed by K2/MST.

*E-questionnaire to Delegations:*

- A short electronic questionnaire was sent to 50 staff working in EU Delegations and at headquarters, selected by K2 because they were in contact with the MSPP and thus benefitted in different ways from the services that were provided/mobilised by the MST. 13 persons replied, which is a response rate of 26%.<sup>7</sup>
- As the 50 staff members were selected by K2/MST they do not constitute a random sample. The high response rate, however, shows the importance the respondents attribute to this project.

*Intermediate exchanges with EEAS:*

- In accordance with the team's proposal to this assignment, the approach to the evaluation was "user-focused" in that it required regular exchanges with the MST and other colleagues from K2. This more participatory approach to the evaluation included regular exchanges with the MST and helped to stimulate internal thinking and reflection on the project.

In terms of **quality control**, the evaluation team was able to triangulate information on the coaching sessions, internal advice and guidance provided and on the setup of the MSPP's legal and administrative infrastructure. Triangulation on the creation of a body of knowledge, on access to external expertise and on working with external partners was difficult due to the limited time in which to implement the project and hence the limited data available to assess, as explained above.

---

<sup>7</sup> Response rates from e-surveys conducted by the team in the context of other evaluations are normally between 5% and 9%.

## 2. The Pilot Project

### 2.1. Background

#### 2.1.1. Overall policy orientations

The *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities*, adopted by the Council of the European Union (15779/09, 10 November 2009)<sup>8</sup> sets out the overall rationale that guided the inclusion in the EEAS budget of a Mediation Support Pilot Project (MSPP). Strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities is considered important as it will help the EU to follow up and implement the *European Security Strategy* (ESS) of 2003 and the SG/HR's *2008 Report on the Implementation of the ESS* that underline the relevance of "preventive engagement" (ESS, 2003) and the need "to expand (the EU's) dialogue and mediation capacities" (SG/HR, 2008). This is in line with the broader EU engagement in the area of conflict prevention set out in the Goteborg Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts of 2001 and the European Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention of 2001.

The *Concept (2009)* further clarifies that the EU will make best use of the resources and expertise that are already available in the EU (including its Member States), as well as involving the United Nations, regional organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the African Union (AU), and national, local and civil society actors. While mediation is not a new area to the EU, strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities will help to establish more coordinated and efficient mechanisms and will thereby enhance the EU's ability to play a more active international role in this area. The budgetary authorities view the pilot project as an initial step toward these more coordinated and efficient mechanisms, possibly leading to an extension and widening of activities in the area of mediation support by the EU.

A more recent example of policy orientation is the *Council Conclusion on Conflict Prevention* (20 June 2011)<sup>9</sup> that invites the High Representative and the Commission to build on the *Concept (2009)* and to strengthen mediation capacities through providing support and training to mediators and their staff. Within the EEAS, in addition to the creation of the MSPP, this has been translated into a guidance note on how to address conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security issues under external cooperation instruments.<sup>10</sup> Its purpose is to raise awareness among the EEAS and Commission services (including EU Delegations) responsible for the upcoming 2014-20 programming exercise of the need to ensure that the above-mentioned issues, including mediation, are adequately factored into the EU's external cooperation instruments. The evaluation team is not aware of any routine communication between EEAS leadership and EU Delegations that highlights the relevance of mediation, informs of the existence of the MST or provides information about the guidance note on how to address conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security issues in programming and related training opportunities. However, the Head of Division K2 systematically presents the work of K2 during various annual seminars attended by Heads of Delegation, Heads of Operations and Heads of the Political Section of EU Delegations.

#### 2.1.2. EU and mediation – an operational perspective

For a significant period of time, the EU has been engaged in the entire spectrum of mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes although these have been used, in practice, in a rather *ad-hoc* manner. The *Concept (2009)* was formulated with the aim of developing a more systematic approach to mediation and

<sup>8</sup> Hereafter referred to as "Concept (2009)".

<sup>9</sup> Hereafter referred to as "Council Conclusions (2011)".

<sup>10</sup> This guidance note is still in a draft version and is currently tested during specific training workshop on how to address conflict prevention, peace-building and security under external cooperation instruments.

dialogue (see Box 1), of clarifying the role to be undertaken by the EU in mediation and of setting out a wider understanding of mediation and dialogue that comprises track 1, track 2 and track 3 activities (see Box 2) and is supported through the full range of tools available to the EU.

Mediation is seen as one of several approaches to engaging in conflict prevention, transformation and resolution and is closely linked to early warning and conflict assessment. It can take place at different levels – national, sub-regional and local – and is most effective if the different levels can be linked with each other.<sup>11</sup> As such, mediation here is conceptualised widely and goes against a perception of mediation as only occurring at track 1, whereby political leaders and eminent persons meet in search of lasting solutions. This misperception of the term “mediation” is also common within the EEAS.

#### **Box 1: Definitions of Mediation and Dialogue**

Mediation is a way of assisting negotiations between conflict parties and transforming conflicts with the support of an acceptable third party. The general goal of mediation is to enable parties in conflict to reach agreements they find satisfactory and are willing to implement.

Dialogue is an open-ended process which aims primarily at creating a culture of communication and search of for common ground, leading to confidence-building and improved interpersonal understanding among representatives of opposing parties which, in turn, can help to prevent conflict and be a means in reconciliation and peace-building processes.

*Source: Concept (2009: 2-3)*

In recent years, mediation has been mainstreamed into a variety of EU conflict prevention and crisis management activities. A desk officer at the EEAS, in DG DEVCO as well as at an EU Delegation can identify and mobilise support to mediation via a variety of instruments such as the Instrument for Stability (IfS, which includes the Policy Advice Mediation Facility (PAMF)), the Early Response Mechanism of the African Peace Facility (APF), which comprises funds for mediation that can be rapidly mobilised, and the European Instrument for Democratisation and Human Rights (EIDHR) through which NGOs active in the area of dialogue and mediation can be funded.

#### **Box 2: Tracks and levels in Mediation and Dialogue**

Track 1 is official diplomacy and mediation at the highest level. It covers formal discussions typically involving high-level political, religious and military leaders and focusing on ceasefires, peace talks and treaties.

Track 1½ diplomacy involves situations where official representatives give authority to non-state actors to negotiate or act as intermediaries on their behalf. These can be advisors and those with direct links to the highest leadership level.

Track 2 diplomacy involves unofficial dialogue and problem-solving activities aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the formal process.

Track 3 diplomacy works at the grassroots level. It is undertaken by private groups to encourage understanding between hostile communities by way of organising meetings, generating media exposure and providing advocacy for marginalised groups.

*Adapted from: European Institute for Peace: costs, benefits and options, Final Report, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012*

<sup>11</sup> Study on EU lessons learnt in mediation and dialogue – Glass half full – 14 November 2012 (Draft)

Political orientation exists in the form of the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)* and there are instruments in place to support mediation-related activities. However, it appears that interviewees had little knowledge of current efforts to translate these political documents into operational guidance. The above-mentioned guidance note on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security in programming is still in draft form, is currently being assessed and has not been distributed widely.

Through the MSPP, the European Parliament aimed to facilitate a better understanding of mediation with the EEAS, to sensitise the institution to the added value of conflict prevention through mediation and to offer knowledge and expertise that enhance the effectiveness of support to mediation. For a desk officer, such a facility can be useful if knowledge of mediation is absent at the desk or among colleagues in EU Delegations. For higher ranks, it can be useful in tapping into critical information about conflict prevention actions from “within the house” that would otherwise have to be mobilised from outside. However the MST, despite some funds having been assigned to the strengthening of mediation capacities within the EU, does not have political clout and can only refer to the conclusions that the Council has adopted in 2011 to point at the importance of mediation.

The above forms the wider institutional background against which this evaluatory review is undertaken. It will look at the MSPP as a first step in strengthening and providing support for mediation initiatives and will analyse how this has been done. It will also acknowledge that the *Concept (2009)*, with its ambitious political aims, might have created a set of expectations that the MSPP – being a small pilot exercise – cannot in itself fulfil.

## 2.2. Objectives and intervention logic of the pilot project

### 2.2.1. Aims as formulated in the 2012 EU General Budget

The aims of the MSPP are listed under “Remarks” in Item 2238 of Section X of the 2012 EU General Budget.<sup>12</sup> The document specifies three clusters of activities that constitute the “faithful intervention logic” as set out by the designers of the MSPP (see Box 2):

- *“Developing and making available training and internal capacity-building opportunities in connection with mediation- and dialogue-related tasks as well as situation awareness for EEAS staff at headquarters, Union staff personnel deployed in missions, and heads of delegation and their staff,*
- *Engaging in knowledge management, including lessons-learned processes, the identification of best practices and development of guidelines,*
- *Preparing for the establishment of a roster of deployable experts in mediation and dialogue processes, taking into consideration the on-going work of the United Nations and other organisations in setting up such rosters.”*

<sup>12</sup> There are no complementary documents that would further specify these objectives. This is also not required. Under the Financial Regulation, Pilot Projects are a specific mechanism through which the European Parliament, with agreement of the Council, can allocate budgetary resources to pilot innovative ideas. Pilot projects do not have a separate legal base and are not subject to a classic Programme and Project Cycle Management approach applied in the implementation of external assistance. Furthermore, the MSPP was included in the EEAS Administrative Budget and is hence administrative not operational expenditure.

**Box 3: Intervention logic**

“The intervention logic may be “faithful” to the programming documents and to the documents establishing the policy to which the intervention is related. In this case, the expected effects are inferred from the stated objectives in the official documents.

When the intervention logic is reconstructed during the evaluation, implicitly expected effects that were not mentioned in the initial documents may be taken into account. The fact that this is no longer a “faithful logic” must then be mentioned. The “faithful” approach is relevant when the objectives are expressed precisely and in a verifiable way. The other option is preferable if objectives are too vague or ambiguous.”

See: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/methods/mth\\_log\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/methods/mth_log_en.htm)

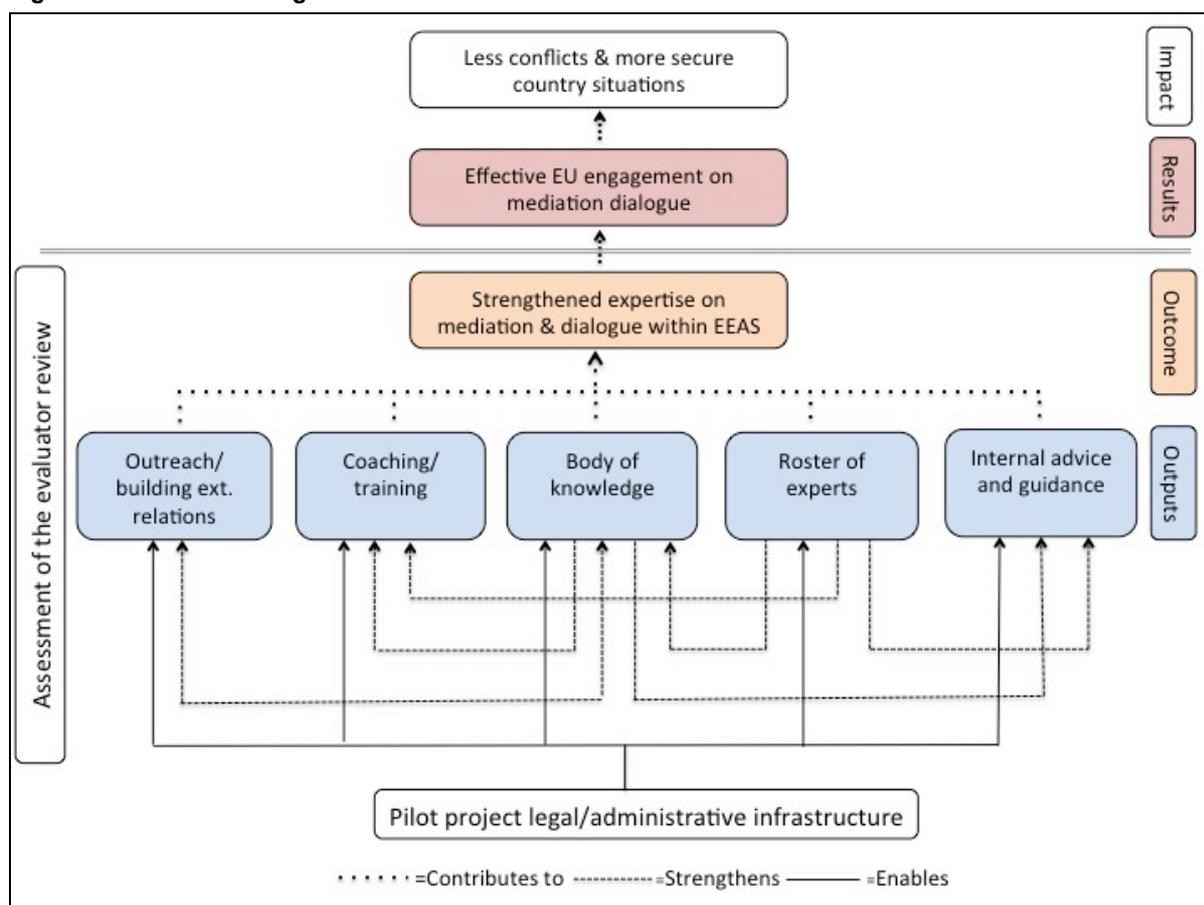
**2.2.2. Reconstructed intervention logic**

The reconstructed intervention logic, set out below, “unfolds” the three activity clusters listed above. In the context of the evaluation, this helped the team to review in more depth the progress made in implementing this pilot, to identify the diversity of stakeholders that have been involved, and to set out the objectives that this review is assessing. From the three activity clusters listed above and preparatory discussions with the MST, one can identify six types of action that the MSPP financed to translate the *Concept (2009)* and political guidance into action:

1. Setting up the basic legal, financial and administrative infrastructure that is needed to operationally run this project;
2. The organisation of coaching/training sessions in mediation and dialogue-related tasks in order to prevent conflict between EEAS staff at headquarters and EU staff personnel deployed in missions;
3. Building up a body of knowledge on lessons learnt, best practices and practical experiences of mediation that will enable the EEAS to create institutional knowledge of the topic, to feed into advisory services for EEAS staff at headquarters and EU staff personnel deployed in missions, and to become a more legitimate mediation actor on the international scene, e.g. when reaching out to and collaborating with non-EU institutional actors;
4. Establishing a roster of deployable experts with experience in mediation and dialogue processes, while at the same time taking into account the on-going work of the United Nations and other organisations in setting up such rosters, and providing operational support to mediators during their assignments;
5. Providing advisory services, including strategic as well as operational guidance on mediation, horizontally throughout the EEAS headquarters and to EU Delegations; such advisory services could be provided through MST staff, through external experts mobilised for coaching activities, through producing studies, and through capturing relevant knowledge on mediation and dialogue activities. The provision of guidance should also encompass the development of guidelines that could be used during missions, training courses, meetings, etc.;
6. Stimulating outreach, relationship building and cooperation with international partners, with relevant NGOs and with other EU institutions in order to draw on their knowledge, expertise and contacts and to establish opportunities for cooperation in the field of mediation and other forms of preventive engagement. Particular attention should be given to the UN and its Mediation Support Unit and to regional organisations such as the AU and the OSCE.

Distinguishing between these types of action, the evaluation team reconstructed the intervention logic as follows (see also Figure 1 and Annex 4 for a bigger version):

Figure 1: Intervention Logic



Through these six types of action a series of “**outputs**” are achieved that help strengthen mediation expertise within the EEAS, notably i) roster of experts, ii) training courses, iii) creation of a body of knowledge, iv) advisory services, v) outreach activities and vi) a basic administrative infrastructure to manage the project. Once these outputs are achieved, they can serve as “inputs” to strengthening the achievement or improvement of other outputs and can thereby strengthen the level of mediation expertise within the EEAS. For example, the body of knowledge can be used during new training courses, but can also be used to back up the provision of advisory services. Experts can be used to mobilise advisory services to EU Delegations but can also be used in the identification of suitable experts to advise staff at EEAS headquarters, including the MST. Outreach activities, such as exchanges with international organisations, can help widen the body of knowledge on mediation and identify areas where the EU can engage with advisory services. None of the above can be realised without a well-functioning basic legal, administrative and financial infrastructure. As such, the respective outputs are interlinked, reinforce each other and contribute to the “**outcome**” of the pilot project, i.e. the achievement of strengthened expertise on mediation and dialogue within the EEAS (also referred to as the “results” in international evaluation terminology). Due to the brevity of its implementation, the pilot project can only aim to achieve an initial strengthening of mediation expertise and to test the usefulness of an MST within the EEAS in providing support to the mediation and dialogue processes of the EU more generally. **The evaluatory review can look at the implementation of the project up to this stage.**

The reconstructed intervention logic further affirms that, once a decision is taken concerning the formal establishment of an MST, the EU’s mediation and dialogue capabilities will become more sustainable and can possibly contribute to a higher level of outcomes and impact. In other words, the strengthened EU

mediation and dialogue capacities can assist in achieving an effective engagement of the EU in mediation, thereby helping to fulfil the EU's political commitments to strengthening *preventive engagement*, as formulated in the ESS (2003) (which would be the “result” at EU level) and contributing to the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty commitments to peace and security (the “impact at global level”).

### 2.2.3. Objectives to be assessed

Against the above understanding of the intervention logic of the pilot project, the team formulated the following overall objective and six specific sub-objectives that are assessed in this evaluatory review:

The MSPP has the overall objective:<sup>13</sup>

- *To initiate the strengthening of internal EU mediation and dialogue capacities with a view to gradually addressing conflict prevention and peacebuilding more effectively.*

This overall objective is realised through the following six specific sub-objectives:

1. *To provide administrative and operational support to managing the execution of the pilot project, including the mobilisation of mediators/ experts for mediation, dialogue and coaching assignments;*
2. *To organise over the period 2011-2012 a number of training courses in mediation and dialogue-related tasks for EEAS staff at headquarters and EU staff personnel deployed in missions;*
3. *To build up a body of knowledge on mediation and dialogue-related activities, for example through (i) the preparation of a series of factsheets with best practices on mediation and dialogue methodology, (ii) a study on lessons learnt from EU engagement with mediation and dialogue-related tasks, and (iii) the compilation of (short) background studies on situations of conflict and fragility;*
4. *To establish a roster of deployable experts with experience in mediation and dialogue processes, in coaching EEAS headquarters staff as well as EU staff personnel deployed in missions, and in undertaking (short) studies or reviews;*
5. *To provide advisory services and strategic as well as operational guidance on mediation and dialogue horizontally throughout the EEAS headquarters and to EU Delegations, including the development of guidelines that can be used during missions, training courses, coaching, meetings and other outreach activities;*
6. *To set up contacts and build up networks with international partners, with relevant NGOs and with other EU institutions to establish opportunities for cooperation in the field of mediation and other forms of preventive engagement.*

## 2.3. Initiation and implementation of the pilot project

### 2.3.1. History

The preparatory process ahead of the programming of funds for an MSPP in the 2012 EU General Budget began in the early 2000s. The process was shaped through a series of formal as well as informal exchanges between members of the European Parliament (EP), representatives of EU Member States (MS), officials of the European Commission (EC) and a variety of non-EU stakeholders and experts who were convinced of the relevance of mediation as an instrument for external action by the EU. Talks also took place in the context of official EU-UN dialogue. The drive to pursue mediation gained momentum

---

<sup>13</sup> If the MSPP is leading into the formal establishment of a MST the expected results would be at a higher level, i.e. the unit would help the EU to become an effective actor on mediation and dialogue internationally and fulfil the political commitments as laid down in the ESS, the Goteborg Programme and the 2001 Communication on Conflict Prevention. The expected impact would be less conflict and more secure country situations/ contexts internationally.

during the Swedish Presidency in 2009 when the *Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities* was adopted by the Council.

The EP approved the allocation of funds for the MSPP with the intention to promote mediation and political dialogue as an approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The MSPP was seen as a vehicle to sensitise the EEAS to the relevance of mediation, to strengthen in-house capacities for mediation, and to create awareness and guidance on how mediation can be used more systematically, and possibly more strategically, as part of the regular work of the EEAS.

No complementary assessment was made of the feasibility of this project (which is in line with standard procedures; see also footnote 7). Similarly, no formulation took place either of more specific objectives, or of a strategic plan to support the creation of mediation capacities within the EU. This explains why K2/MST had to start the MSPP from scratch with a minimal set of guidelines and limited institutional preparedness to execute the requested tasks.

### **2.3.2. Financial commitments and contracts**

In accordance with Article 49 (6) of the Financial Regulation, € 1 million of commitment appropriations were incorporated into the EEAS budget as a pilot scheme for implementation in the years 2011 and 2012 with completion foreseen on 31 December 2012. Due to the gradual start of the MSPP as of mid-2011 (see for more information Section 2.3.3) the project could only commit € 377,000 of the € 600,000 that were allocated for the year. The remaining funds for 2011 could not be transferred for use in 2012 due to the EU Financial Regulations. For 2012, the project could commit 100% of the allocated € 400,000.

The funds for 2011 were used to pay the salaries of two contract agents since last trimester, the framework contract for coaching and training (contract with TEA-CEGOS, implemented by MediatEUr) and mediation-related missions conducted by EEAS staff. The funds for 2012 were used to pay the salaries of three contract agents, two low-value contracts for studies (Mali and Syria), the framework contract for preparatory actions, i.e. knowledge products and the evaluatory review (specific contract with CARDNO, implemented by ECDPM), mediation-related missions for EEAS staff and the project entitled 'Access to Experts' to deploy experts for mediation support (service contract signed through a negotiated procedure, implemented by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)).

In accordance with the Financial Regulations that apply for the EEAS, the MSPP – being part of the EEAS and not the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI) – can only operate through “administrative credits” which can be used exclusively in supporting the internal institutional functioning and strengthening of the EEAS. Any functioning through “operational credits” used for the implementation of activities in support of partners or processes in which partners are engaged, is prohibited. The MSPP is therefore obliged to limit its activities to those that have no relation to projects or processes that fall outside the realm of EEAS’ internal activities and proceedings.

### **2.3.3. Building the MSPP infrastructure**

At the start of the project, the EEAS was not institutionally equipped to implement a project like the MSPP. K2 became the institutional home to the MSPP and had to build up its human resources, administrative and management capacities from scratch in order to get the project off the ground. This happened under the overall management of the new Head of Division K2, who was appointed for this position in October 2011. This build-up took also place during a time of institutional reorganisation during which K2 was removed from its line function at the Managing Directorate of Global and Multilateral Affairs and placed within a

separate directorate reporting to the Deputy Secretary General of Inter-Institutional Affairs who also heads the Conflict Prevention Group.

In spring 2011, a permanent EEAS staff member was designated as Coordinator of the MST and assured preparatory tasks ahead of the implementation of the MST from spring/summer 2011. Four additional staff were subsequently mobilised; the first and second in September 2011, the third in November 2011, and the fourth in March 2012. These recruits brought valuable additional expertise to K2 in the area of mediation and peacebuilding and helped to get the project off the ground in terms of substantive knowledge of mediation. Also valuable was their collective experience in developing the *Concept (2009)* and in working with and within EU Member States, EU institutions and the UN; thus they were well connected to a variety of European and international stakeholders and networks active in the area of mediation as well as having expertise in broader issues.

The fourth recruit was mobilised to cover administration, finance and legal matters as these aspects became very task-intensive and were achieved through a learning-by-doing approach. Earlier attempts to process this work by staff members who were mobilised for mediation-related activities failed because of the voluminous character of these tasks. The mobilisation of the fourth recruit also needs to be seen against the low disbursement rate of the project during 2011, which was hindered by a range of missing administrative and legal elements that are essential for smooth project implementation, including capabilities to procure, financially manage and monitor the project.

In addition to mobilising human resources, there are three additional elements that were crucial to the launching of the MSPP. Firstly, the Chief Operating Officer of the EEAS sub-delegated powers to the Head of K2 to manage the administrative budget for the MSPP. This appointment as an authorising officer sub-delegated (AOSD) of a Head of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Division was made by signature on 29 November 2011. With this authorisation, the Head of K2 became responsible for management of MSPP credits. However, additional permission had to be negotiated with the Payment Management Office (PMO) to allow K2 the use of mission credits. In 2011, a total of € 13,000 was used for mediation-related missions, in 2012, € 74,008.

Secondly, the EEAS had limited access to framework contracts through which external expertise could be mobilised. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the EEAS and the EC's DG Human Resources already existed and allowed for the conclusion of a framework in November 2011 for training and coaching with TEA-CEGOS (see above). With DG DEVCO, the access to framework contracts COM 2011 (Lots 1 to 3) that are under the lead of DG DEVCO, had to be negotiated. A MoU was signed in May 2012 and allowed for a contract for preparatory actions with CARDNO (see above).

Thirdly, the EEAS originally had neither the financial staff nor specific internal financial control mechanisms to ensure the quality control services to a project like the MSPP. Equally, the financial department of the EEAS was not prepared in controlling framework contracts and no mandate to control contracts that fall below the € 60,000 threshold. Through a series of internal meetings that took place between November 2011 and April 2012, and the allocation of human resources within the financial department of the EEAS for the purpose of financial quality control of the MSPP, the issue was solved to the satisfaction of K2.

#### **2.3.4. Coaching sessions**

A contract with an external service provider was signed in November 2011 and allowed the implementation of 12 coaching/training sessions at EEAS headquarters as well as EU Delegations to which 170 persons participated (see Table 1). Additionally, five one-to-one coaching sessions were provided to EEAS staff

taking up new positions in EU Delegations as well as to staff in on-going assignments, including two EU Special Representatives. Additionally, a consultant specialised in transitional justice was mobilised through this contract to join a Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission to Madagascar.

The global objective for the contract aims to make available in-depth and specialised coaching opportunities to those directly involved in mediation or mediation support in the EEAS and Commission, including those working in CSDP missions and EU Delegations.

**Table 1: Coaching/ training sessions implemented**

<b>Coaching/Training sessions</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Syria (in Brussels)	17 February 2012	6
Madagascar	16 March 2012	3
South Africa	19-27 April 2012	13
Zimbabwe	19-27 April 2012	8
Kenya	21-25 May 2012	20
Nigeria	3-6 July 2012	24
Kyrgyzstan	23-29 May 2012	20
Yemen	7-8 August & 18 September 2012	3
Sahel (in Brussels)	28 September 2012	13
Cairo	8/9 October	13
South Caucasus	15-20 October & 16 November 2012	23
MEPP (in Brussels)	6 November 2012	5
Serbia/Kosovo (in Brussels)	25 October	2
Afghanistan	28-30 November	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>

The coaching programme has a modular setup and was provided through one, one-and-a-half and two-day sessions supported by a Handbook. The programme comprises a general introduction to mediation followed by a discussion of core mediation capabilities, exercises, lessons learnt and cases more broadly. As shown by the evaluation sheets and reports prepared by the team, the overall response to these courses was positive. The team could assess 28 evaluation forms out of 54 participants to five missions, in which 20 participants indicated that they were fully satisfied (4) or satisfied to a significant extent (16), on a scale of 1 to 5 (fully satisfied being the highest score). A review of the written comments, as well as a summary of the main messages from the mission reports, is provided in Box 3 (see also Annex 6 for complementary messages from the coaching sessions).

**Box 4: A brief stocktake of coaching/training sessions**

- Participants appreciated that sessions used the *Concept (2009)* as a principal reference point to discuss mediation and its place in wider efforts to address conflict prevention. As such, the full spectrum of EU conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mediation approaches and responses were touched upon rather than a narrow definition of track 1 mediation.
- Participants recommended that sessions should reduce theory to the minimum and that efforts should be made to link the sessions as much as possible to their own country and regional context. Regional experts should be included in sessions and more effort should be made to use country and regional cases generated by participants to make the sessions more relevant to participant's day-to-day work.
- The presence of a member of K2 should become a priority, subject to an available mission budget, in order to ensure the knowledge generated is retained within K2 but also to ensure clear and accurate portrayal of the EEAS' engagement in the issues and response to queries raised by colleagues during the sessions.
- The participation of EC staff (including staff from the operational sections) was crucial to ensuring linkages with, and understanding of, the local context and to ensuring that EU instruments could be linked to the EU approach in support of mediation and dialogue. Efforts should be made to ensure the participation of local stakeholders as well as representatives of other donors that support or lead on mediation.
- Organisational and logistical support to the training needs to be further addressed, and sufficient attention should be paid to the complex interaction between EEAS headquarters (desk and K2), EU Delegations, and consultants (contract holder and experts). Future sessions should also make an effort to link up with DG DEVCO's geo-desks and with the Fragility and Crisis Management Division in DG DEVCO ahead of the fielding of the mission.

**2.3.5. Knowledge products**

The MST has commissioned four knowledge products during its period of implementation up to June 2012. These concern one study on mediation support in Mali (*Comment mobiliser chercheurs et experts à des fins de diplomatie silencieuse [track 2] – L'exemple du Mali*) and one study on transition in Syria (*A study into constitutional, legal and institutional arrangements relevant for transition in Syria*). Both products were realised through low-value contracts (up to € 5,000) which allowed the MST to mobilise consultants for this work without a lengthy tendering procedure.

The other two knowledge products are part of the framework contract with CARDNO (see above). One is the production of five fact sheets that summarise European experiences and best practice in mediation and dialogue; the second is the production of a study on lessons learnt in mediation and dialogue. At the time of writing of this evaluatory report, these two products were still under production.

The study on Syria was commissioned to strengthen the EEAS' ability to engage meaningfully in any future supporting role it may have in political dialogue/mediation processes in relation to the conflict in Syria. The study provided factual information and analysis and served EEAS colleagues as background information during the emerging civil war in Syria as well as informing international efforts to solve the crisis. The study was a modest contribution to a wider package of work by the EEAS for which complementary experts' inputs were provided at the time of writing this document (see section 2.3.6.).

The work on Mali received a mixed response for the first part of the MST's involvement (until mid-2012) but very positive responses as of September 2012. The reasons for this are manifold. The ToR for the initial work of the consultant envisaged the production of a knowledge product on the situation in Mali (mapping of actors, analysis of the dynamics of the conflict) and, in close cooperation with the EU Delegation, the creation and stimulation of a network of researchers with experience of the Sahel region who could be used to support track 2 mediation in the future. The work was meant to feed into the on-going efforts of the EU Delegation to deal with the crisis. Stakeholders concerned perceived the approach of K2/MST as too pro-active at a time when the EU's position on the conflict in Mali and on how to deal with it was not fully

formulated. Preparation and coordination with the EU Delegation was not optimal, partially due to the already on-going financing of funding for mediation through EDF funds and to an incomplete understanding of the added value of the MST's involvement and the role of the consultant in this process. Meanwhile, the cooperation has become a regular and constructive engagement with staff dealing with the Mali crisis for which the inputs of K2 are highly appreciated. The EEAS has, since mid-2012, set out a clearer line on how to deal with Mali. This has helped to organise follow-up exchanges on the Sahel with different stakeholders (as of September 2012) and also enabled a redrafting of the consultant's work, which the Sahel Coordinator chose to circulate to all members of the Sahel Task Force.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.3.6. Roster of experts

According to the remarks of the EU budgetary authorities (Chapter 22, EU General Budget 2012 – see above) the MST should “[prepare] for the establishment of a roster of deployable experts in mediation and dialogue processes, taking into consideration the on-going work of the United Nations and other organisations in setting up such rosters.”

The main function of the roster is to make expertise available that can be used to support mediation and dialogue efforts at short notice. The MST's approach in response to this request was the formulation of a tender through which an external service provider could be mobilised, rather than the creation and maintenance of a roster in-house. The project is entitled “Access to experts”. The MST chose to select this service provider through a negotiated procedure (below a value of € 60,000) which allowed for a rapid identification.

The overall objective of the contract is to provide the MST with “*high-quality external [technical assistance] in the area of peace mediation and dialogue support. The expertise will be used to support EU-led or EU-supported dialogue and mediation efforts and should be available at short notice.*”<sup>15</sup>

By July 2012, the MST had identified the service provider, the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) based in Finland with an office in Brussels. The MST has commissioned so far three different actions, one in Central Asia on water management (desk study), one in Lebanon (deployment; assistance to the EU Delegation to formulate a strategy), and one in relation to Syria (study and workshop in Brussels). Mission reports were not yet available at the time of writing of the evaluatory review. The intention of the MST is to ensure that a pool of deployable mediation expertise can be identified and that structures and procedures allow this to be deployed rapidly. Colleagues from the MST emphasised that such expertise should be linked up with and should complement existing or future EU and EU-MS rosters. This could eventually lead to a roster of mediation experts as intended by the budgetary authorities.

Comments made during interviews with colleagues at the EEAS show that there is a lack of clarity within the institution as to what extent such activities fall outside or within the scope of the MSPP budget. The objectives of this contract are to support colleagues within the MSPP and throughout the EEAS, but also in other EU institutions, in their mediation, facilitation and dialogue efforts in EU-led but also EU-supported activities. According to the specifications of the ToR, this can involve “*the provision of expertise in the design, planning and management of pre-negotiation, negotiation and implementation frameworks, including national dialogue processes and post-agreement follow-up mechanisms.*” Such support to the work of EU Delegation staff is to be financed through administrative credits, although comments made during interviews pointed out that something of a “grey area” exists as to what is administrative and what is

<sup>14</sup> Information received by K2/MST while finalising this document in December 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from TOR for the contract “Access to experts”.

operational<sup>16</sup>. E.g., if a technical assistant provides services to a national dialogue process in which EU Delegation staff and national stakeholders are involved, it might be difficult to draw a clear line between the activities that can be funded by administrative credits and those that can be funded by operational credits.

Currently, discussions are on-going concerning the establishment of an Instrument for Stability (IfS)-funded mechanism, administered by the Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI), through which mediation can be supported better and faster. This mechanism would have similar objectives to those formulated in the contract with CMI (which is due to end in mid-December 2012) and could be misunderstood by staff who do not fully understand the role of the MST in support of the functioning of the EU versus the new FPI mechanism that can mobilise technical assistance for operational support. If a similar contract was concluded for 2013, a complementarity of this contract vis-à-vis the new IfS-funded mechanism would need to be found by the MST and the FPI.

### 2.3.7. Advisory services

The MST, supervised by the Head of K2, provided a range of advisory services to colleagues inside the EEAS as well as to EU Delegations. These services evolved and were executed in the initial phase of the MSPP through an approach of “shaping demand” and “advertising MST services within the house”, as expressed by one colleague from the MST. This happened via the contacting of colleagues from geo-desks, by reaching out through personal contacts and by participating in meetings at which conflict-related issues were discussed. This process happened organically and gradually created specific demands for services.

A concrete example is the request by the EU Delegation in Myanmar to advise on the setting up of the Myanmar Peace Centre and to support the Delegation conceptually on how to address conflict and mediation. This information on Myanmar could subsequently be used by the Head of K2 during high-level meetings in follow-up to the mission. Other examples are the Sahel and Syria where expertise and knowledge of mediation was channelled back into the organisation. Gradually, the activities of K2/MST attracted the attention of senior management as well as the leadership of the EEAS which can be traced via requests for participation of the Head of K2 in a number of high-level meetings, for example on Togo, but also through presentations to annual seminars of Heads of Delegations.

The provision of advisory services helped to shape the profile of the MST toward certain groups of colleagues within the EEAS. The institutional reorganisation in 2012, during which K2 was removed from its line function in the Managing Directorate of Global and Multilateral Affairs and placed within a separate directorate that reports to the Deputy Secretary General of Inter-Institutional Affairs (who also heads the Conflict Prevention Group) helped to increase the profile of the work of K2 in the area of mediation and conflict prevention. It should however be clear that given the brevity of the MSPP, only a relatively small number of Divisions and geo-desks could be informed of the pilot project. While the team has not conducted any surveys on the profiling of the MST within the EEAS, the impressions gained from interviews and the e-survey suggest that only partial awareness exists of the possible services that the MST could provide to the organisation.

---

<sup>16</sup> According to the training document of the EU Central Financial Service, entitled “Welcome to the Expenditure Lifecycle”, the *administrative expenditure* is necessary for the functioning of the institutions: its staff costs, office space and equipment, etc. The *operational expenditure* is needed for the implementation of the policies decided by the legislators - the Council and the European Parliament. These policies are transposed in basic acts, themselves implemented through programmes or projects.

### **2.3.8. Networking and outreach**

Colleagues from the MST and K2 engaged in a variety of networking and outreach activities outside the EU institutions, thus helping to share information about the work of the EEAS in the area of mediation, to exchange with stakeholders, to generate new ideas and insights and to provide feedback and practical insight into the day-to-day work of the EEAS, K2 and the MSPP more specifically.

In March 2012, K2/MST organised a workshop on Mali with a view to reviewing the current situation with colleagues from other departments of the EEAS, other EU institutions, and civil society organisations and experts specialised on the Sahel. This exchange was highly welcomed by the different parties as it showed the openness and interest of K2/MST to share ideas and questions in relation to conflict prevention and mediation with outsiders. The event also helped to position K2/MST as a knowledge facilitator with the potential to bring together a variety of actors with a view to stimulating debate and ideas on how to tackle a crisis as complex as the Mali case. The exchange on Mali continued with a mediation information-sharing event on this country at the end of September 2012.

K2/MST also performed a number of networking activities outside the EEAS. These included missions to the Istanbul Conference on Mediation (February 2012), consultations with regional, sub-regional and other international organisations on developing guidance on mediation (Saudi Arabia, April 2012), attendance at the OSCE Chairmanship Conference, entitled “Shared Future: Building and Sustaining Peace: The Northern Ireland Case Study” (Ireland, April 2012) as well as participation in a number of peace, mediation and transitional justice training courses and workshops (Finland, UK, Switzerland, Germany) between March and June 2012.

Finally, the MST maintained regular exchange with colleagues from the UN's Mediation and Support Unit (MSU) and DG DEVCO's Fragility and Crisis Management Unit to discuss upcoming issues, harmonise approaches and review specific mediation-related experiences in which the EU and the UN were involved, for example on Yemen. These exchanges were considered highly relevant by colleagues from the UN as well as DG DEVCO.

## 3. Assessment

### 3.1. Introduction

This assessment starts from the overall objective as formulated above and takes account of the orientations for this evaluation, as formulated in the 2012 EU budget. The assessment will analyse the extent to which the MSPP has successfully supported the strengthening of internal EU mediation and dialogue capacities since its start in 2011. As this is a very short period for review, the evidence on which the evaluation team can base its judgement will be limited. As mentioned in the section on methodology, the team will use the seven EU evaluation dimensions as the ordering principle for its review.

The activities supported by the MSPP will be assessed from two angles. First, the team will look at the achievements of the project more narrowly, i.e. to what extent the project was implemented in line with the stipulations of the 2012 EU budget. Secondly, recognising the spirit of the *Concept (2009)*, the team will also look further and investigate to what extent the project could support the EEAS to fulfil its role as an initiator and facilitator of change within the EU institutions and thus enable the Union's internal capacities for mediation to be strengthened. This second angle takes into account the wider institutional and political context of the EU in which the MSPP is implemented and will assess whether the MSPP could make a contribution to what is expressed in the explanatory notes to the 2012 EU budget: that “[t]he preparatory action should be seen as a first step in strengthening and providing sustainable support for mediation initiatives by first increasing the Union's internal capabilities, without excluding support in the form of external and contractual expertise.”

### 3.2. Relevance

- a) Are the activities implemented through the MSPP in line with policies and priorities set for/by the EEAS?
- b) Are the tasks executed to strengthen mediation and dialogue considered as relevant to staff at EEAS headquarters as well as staff deployed in EU Delegations?

In response to the first question, the actions executed through the MSPP are overall in line with the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)* and the requests of the budgetary authorities, as listed in the EU 2012 budget. These three sources remain the principal references against which to assess the relevance of this project for the EEAS.

This leads to the second question regarding the relevance of the MSPP to staff at EEAS headquarters as well as staff deployed in EU Delegations. Two perspectives will be explored in the following analysis. The first is the perspective of staff who work at (geo-)desks and in EU Delegations and the extent to which the activities of this project are relevant to their work, i.e. increase the likelihood of accomplishing their goals.<sup>17</sup> From the following, the team assessed the overall response to this question to be a “cautious yes”.

As regards day-to-day operations, interviewees and respondents to the e-survey as well as the feedback forms to the coaching sessions indicate that it is appropriate and desired to have the services of the MST within the house. The project was able to provide valuable advice, enhance knowledge on how to approach mediation in field operations and provide mobilised in-depth background information, such as in the case of Syria. The production of knowledge products is still on-going and cannot be assessed beyond the two

<sup>17</sup> "Something (A) is relevant to a task (T) if it increases the likelihood of accomplishing the goal (G), which is implied by T." - Hjørland, B. & Sejer Christensen, F. (2002). Work tasks and socio-cognitive relevance: a specific example. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 53(11), 960-965.

studies that the MST commissioned through low-value contracts. Inputs provided to the Myanmar desk and EU Delegation as well as to the work of the EEAS on the Middle East were useful and were partially fed into high-level and strategic meetings within the EEAS. Coaching sessions were useful insofar as they could facilitate exchange and learning in relation to on-going country or regional processes. A contract to mobilise expertise for advisory services (which was done in response to the aim of setting up a roster of experts) had just started at the time of writing this evaluatory review, with no feedback having yet been received on its relevance to field operations. The overall comment on relevance, however, is that the inputs need to be provided on time, in the right form, at a high quality and with a full understanding of the process supported or led by the geo-desks and EU Delegations. Investments made in setting up the legal and administrative side of the project were considered highly relevant as this facilitated a smooth operation of MSPP supported activities.

The second perspective relates back to the overall policy orientation as set out in the *Concept (2009)*, the *Council Conclusions (2011)* and the EU 2012 budget. The assessment made by the evaluation team is informed by respondents from within the EEAS and EU Delegations as well as external stakeholders, other EU institutions, the UN, and the range of mediation and conflict prevention experts interviewed by the mission.

While there are staff members in the EEAS and in EU Delegations who have been involved in conflict prevention and different types of mediation activities in the past and who are thus relatively knowledgeable about mediation this contrasts with the overall knowledge among EEAS and EU Delegation staff of the potential relevance of mediation. There are widespread misperceptions and misunderstandings of the role mediation can play as an element of wider conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches that need to be put into perspective, including at senior management level. It became also evident from the interviews, that the content of the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)* are not widely known among staff, hence resulting in a relative absence of attention given to mediation as one of the mechanisms to deal with conflict.

In view of this situation, respondents agreed that the range of activities executed through the MSPP is potentially highly relevant. Coaching sessions, the provision of advisory services and the feeding of discussions through knowledge products can gradually change the way people think about conflict and how to deal with it. While the dataset available to support this statement is relatively thin, the mission identified traces of evidence in the e-surveys and feedback forms to the coaching sessions that underpin this finding.

The MSPP acted also as a kind of catalyst in moving operations to the next level, as in the case of Nigeria and Myanmar, where EU Delegation staff could use the advice provided for further action. The project also helped bring colleagues from different departments within the EEAS into joint action (as shown by the example of Yemen), thus facilitating exchange among peers, such as the regional meeting in Kyrgyzstan. Finally, according to staff in DG DEVCO, the UN and the EEAS, it facilitated the bridging of gaps across institutions in clarifying open questions and work processes. However, more should be done, in particular concerning outreach toward DG DEVCO where interviewees pointed out the pressing need to also provide mediation expertise.

### 3.3. Efficiency

*To what extent were the resources provided to the MST used efficiently given the institutional context in which the pilot project was set up?*

Overall, K2 used the provided resources very efficiently. The legal and administrative leaps that had to be taken in setting up a smooth administrative operation of the MSPP were described in section 2.3.2. Given the institutional unpreparedness of the EEAS to implement a project, which is not the ordinary business of this institution, and the various management issues that had to be solved within the house (including the mobilisation of additional human resources, the need to obtain permission to authorise funds and the establishment of financial control mechanisms), the project got relatively quickly off the ground. This could however have happened faster if the management had decided to recruit from the beginning a staff member to deal with the legal, financial and administrative matters of this project. Interviews held with stakeholders involved in the MSPP before and after this recruitment (in March 2012) differed significantly in terms of opinions expressed on efficiency and the handling of administrative, legal and financial questions.

Funds were also used well in the recruitment of MSPP staff who possess, when grouped together, a varied background of knowledge and expertise on mediation having worked with the EU, the UN and bi-lateral donors. Knowledge of the institutional functioning of the EEAS and the EU more widely, including of the various instruments in place to fund mediation (and how to use them) and of the financial procedures and various EU institutions involved in conflict prevention, proved particularly valuable and should be prioritised in any possible future mobilisation of human resources, in addition to mediation expertise.

An issue that needs to be carefully monitored is the balance between the depth and breadth of service provision. The case of Myanmar, involving a currently understaffed geo-desk and an EU Delegation still in the process of being established, shows that the MST can be easily pulled into an excessive amount of work at the expense of conducting its intended advisory tasks that would benefit the EEAS more broadly. This risk was well managed by the MST, resulting in the envisaged mobilisation of mediation expertise for the Myanmar Delegation through other instruments that the MST helped to identify. This can be taken as an example of good practice on how to manage similar cases in the future, as well as demonstrating how important it is to avoid the creation of unrealistic expectations and to frame from the outset the type and scope of services that the MST can mobilise.

While some consultants criticised the “cumbersome and time-consuming” EU framework contracts and procedures that increase transaction costs, a generic issue that goes far beyond the responsibility of the MST, the comments made by outsiders working with K2/MST were overall very positive. The unit showed attentiveness and engagement, de-briefed consultants well, was approachable and followed up on issues that needed attention. Some improvements could be made as regards feedback to mission reports and the advisory trajectories prepared by external experts.

An internal review confirmed consultants’ opinion that the participation of a K2/MST staff member in a coaching mission proved valuable and in some cases was essential, both in order to ensure that the knowledge generated is retained within the Division and to ensure clear and accurate portrayal of the EEAS’ engagement in the issues and responses to queries raised by colleagues on the spot. There is also a need to continually monitor the logistics and preparation of the missions in order that visits may be well coordinated between the EEAS, the geo-desks, the EU Delegations and the consultants. The case of Zimbabwe, where coordination with the EU Delegation proved difficult, underlines the importance of this point. Positive experiences, such as the coaching mission to Nigeria, should be reviewed carefully in order to assess the amount of human resources required by the MST to prepare such a mission. Positive

remarks were also made about the flexibility of the coaching contracts, which allowed the implementation of different types of services to EU Delegations. These ranged from direct training to group and individual coaching to regional peer exchanges on mediation.

Communication channels within the EU institutions, as well as between the EU and colleagues working at the UN, are short. A high level of satisfaction was expressed by colleagues from different institutions as regards their working relationship with K2/MST, the constructiveness of the exchange, and the level of responsiveness of K2/MST to urgent matters. Videoconference facilities are used to group colleagues from the different institutions at work-floor level in order to solve issues that fall within their level of authority. The regularity of these calls should be maintained.

### 3.4. Intermediate outcomes (impact)

*To what extent are the EEAS' internal capacities to purposefully engage in the area of mediation and dialogue strengthened?*

Given the shortness of the pilot project, this question cannot really be answered, although it is possible to highlight a number of positive outcomes of activities and outputs achieved or supported by the MST. In addition, some "traces of evidence" can be pointed out that provide indications as to the effect the MSPP has had on the EEAS.

The coaching sessions led to several follow-up requests for contribution to mediation-related activities in which the EU Delegation was involved as well as to requests for further training and information provision. Examples are Yemen, Myanmar and Kenya. In the cases of Nigeria and Myanmar, the Delegation could utilise the inputs of the MST to further deepen its engagement in conflict prevention activities financed through other instruments.

Different interviews also indicated that the inputs of K2/MST to the creation of demand have resulted in genuine requests for advice and services from geo-desks, from some EU Delegations and from senior ranks within the EEAS, e.g. regarding participation in high-level meetings. While such traces of evidence are invariably difficult to measure, they indicate that the MSPP activities have created some momentum through which mediation, as an instrument for external action, has become more considered.

Finally, there are two indications that the EEAS and the EU authorities are taking mediation more seriously. Firstly, the EU budget for 2013 envisages an allocation of € 500,000 for conflict prevention and mediation support services. Funds should be used in the deployment of staff in support of mediation and dialogue processes, in contracting internal and external mediation and dialogue experts, in engaging in knowledge management (including conflict analysis and lessons learnt studies and workshops) and in the coaching/training of staff involved in mediation and other conflict prevention activities at EEAS headquarters and in EU Delegations. Interviewees take this allocation as a sign of continued commitment to the strengthening of mediation capabilities and as a positive recognition of the initial work carried out by K2.

Secondly, there are on-going discussions concerning the establishment of a mechanism through which mediation can be better supported operationally through Instrument for Stability (IfS) funding. At the time of writing this evaluatory review, no further details were available; however the discussion of whether more funds should be allocated to supporting EU-led or supported mediation and dialogue activities is a sign of growing ownership of the topic within the EEAS and FPI and shows growing awareness of the fact that mediation needs to be given more attention in external action. The gradual enhancement of ownership of

mediation and dialogue as instruments for external action was one of the concepts based on which the budgetary authorities financed the MSPP and has been largely achieved.

### 3.5. Added value

*Did the project add value to what EU Member States, international organisations and other external actors undertake in relation to mediation and dialogue activities?*

While an assessment of the added value dimension is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the team can highlight views and perceptions collected from interviewees of the extent to which the MSPP has been of added value vis-à-vis the actions of actors outside EU institutions.

There appears to be broad agreement that the MST, being placed within the EEAS, has exposure to work processes, access to information and contacts, and the capacity to provide services within the institution that an outsourced service (e.g. an NGO) could not make use of or, in the case of service provision, could not achieve to the level of an internal facility. There is also agreement that the facility, once it is known within the EEAS and the Delegations and once sufficient trust has been built among colleagues to rely on its services, has an added value vis-à-vis certain technical expertise that UN organisations can offer in the area of mediation and dialogue. For this to function effectively, a thorough knowledge of the internal dynamics, procedures and funding opportunities as well as a perspective that takes the complexity of the EU into account is indispensable. Several interviewees referred to the meeting on Mali organised by K2/MST in March 2012 as an example of added value, as K2/MST was able to bring different stakeholders together from within the EEAS as well as from outside; a task that an outside service provider would have found it considerably harder to accomplish. Equally there seems to be positive appreciation of the EU's work in Myanmar, where the role of the MST was appreciated as an internal mechanism that could provide crucial expertise through taking into account the institutional context of the EEAS.

The question also triggered a series of wider comments on the added value of the EU as an international actor in mediation that go beyond the mandate of the MST and beyond the scope of this evaluatory review. Such comments pointed at the desire to clarify more precisely where the EU sees its added value, geographically as well as practically, vis-à-vis the work of other partners engaged in mediation and dialogue. According to the respondents, such orientation could help to clarify whether the EU sees any added value in supporting or leading mediation activities in certain regions of the world, whether it might do better to complement the activities of the UN or whether mediation should rather be left to non-governmental organisations.

There were also questions, and even confusion as one person expressed it, as to the level and quality of involvement of the EU in conflict prevention activities. Mediation should, *a priori*, be institutionally anchored regionally or locally and should be executed through regional or local mediation expertise and mechanisms whose actions are ideally supported and owned by their respective environments. The EU's added value in relation to such processes should also be discussed, including the role it should take vis-à-vis regional organisations that support mediation. Given these deficiencies, it would be useful to formulate a set of principles based on which guidance could be shaped on how the EU should relate (if at all) to such regional and endogenous processes of change and how its actions can strengthen ownership for mediation and dialogue among local partners.

Finally, there was a call to critically review the role the EU should play in the area of mediation in light of the support it provides to the UN, for example to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s

Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, the UN-MSU stand-by team, and the capacity development programmes it has undertaken to train local mediators. Indeed this would complement the findings and recommendations of the lessons learnt study in terms of getting the most out of international partnerships.

### 3.6. Complementarity

*Did the MST take into account complementary activities on mediation and dialogue rolled out by EU Member States, international organisations and other external actors?*

Given the scope of this review and the strong relationship of the EU with the UN in the area of mediation, focus here is placed on the complementarity of the MST's activities vis-à-vis the UN's Mediation Support Unit (MSU). Relationships with EU Member States (EU-MS) are primarily dealt with by geo-desks at the EEAS and DG DEVCO and fall outside the current scope of orientation of the MST. The principal exposure of K2/MST to EU-MS has been via the participation of the K2's Head of Division in Council meetings and the participation of some EU-MS officials in training and coaching events.<sup>18</sup>

The team recorded questions among UN staff about the added value of the EU's engagement given its ongoing funding of UN activities in the areas of mediation and conflict prevention. It appears that the MST paid particular attention to the relationship with the UN against an overall changing context in which the EU's role evolves from funder to partner in the area of mediation. K2/MST followed a cooperation and partnership model that was overall successfully implemented. The mobilisation of an MST staff member with work experience in the UN's MSU was relevant as it helped to open communication channels and to establish a good mutual understanding of the activities of each partner at an operational level. There is also awareness at working level – given the range of crisis situations to be dealt with – of the fact that a division of work based on good coordination is beneficial to both organisations. Regular video conferences are thus held between the UN, EEAS and DG DEVCO at which current issues are discussed and interviewees from different sides underlined the usefulness and constructiveness of these exchanges.

There are concerns, however, as regards the use of the UN's MSU standby team in EU mediation-related activities. So far, a gender expert has been deployed to participate in a panel discussion carried out in coordination with K2/MST. Questions were raised as to why, in the absence of similar EU capacity to engage in mediation, the EU could not make more use of this UN facility that is itself co-financed by the EU. Given the limited scope of this evaluatory review, the team could not further investigate this question although it should be assessed in the future.

Some problems were encountered in the case of Yemen where the MST, in coordination with the EU Delegation, provided technical assistance to the planning of the national dialogue in a situation where the UN also had a prominent role. A mission was fielded to prepare a joint UN-EU workshop that aimed to function as a platform for exchange and dialogue. Subsequent exchanges between the UN and the EU led to the plans to organise the workshop being cancelled. This case provided staff in both institutions (i.e. the MSU as well as the MSPP) with a good learning ground based on which to enhance their communication and coordination (to which the regular video conferences mentioned above are also contributing), while simultaneously resolving the Yemen issue.

---

<sup>18</sup> Other contacts: EU-MS officials also participated during the CMI Conference on EU as a vector of change, and exposure to the work of K2/MST happened through informal contacts, for example the EU participation in the Friends of Mediation formulation within the UN that includes EU-MS.

For the UN, it is important that K2/MST define its role as complementary to what the UN and other actors are already undertaking on mediation. The case of the Sahel crisis has been mentioned in this context. Meanwhile, the *Concept (2009)* clearly specifies how the EU perceives this relationship and the importance of ensuring complementarity between the actions of the two parties. However, while this is not the view of the EEAS, there remains a perception among stakeholders the team interviewed beyond the UN that the EU can make greater contributions in Eastern Neighbourhood countries that fall within its regional domain. The higher level of EU representation in partner countries and among regional organisations as compared to the UN is also a factor that shapes political clout and that the UN recognises. Finally, the EU can act overall more independently of the partner country, which distinguishes it from the UN if the host-country in question has UN membership.

Concerning complementarity vis-à-vis the EU-MS, several interviewees noted the absence of attention paid to the activities undertaken by the various MS in the area of mediation. While none of the European states that engage in or support mediation have a project or unit within their departments that is equivalent to the MST, some EU-MS are particularly active in mediation in certain regions of the world. Moreover, different EU MS think differently about the importance of mediation in EU external action and there is awareness among some MS that the EU as a whole is better equipped to engage in mediation as compared to an EU-MS. Positions range from the full support given by Nordic countries such as Sweden and Finland to EU-MS that prioritise other areas such as building military capability to address conflicts. While this makes for potentially complex interaction with EU-MS it should not be left aside, as indicated by several comments made during interviews.

The MST has so far paid little attention to this dimension and interviewees suggested to look at the potential synergies that can be created between the actions taken by the EU and those undertaken by the EU-MS. This could result in a more systematic way of working with EU-MS on mediation, for example through regular exchanges with actors from the EU-MS in the context of a knowledge network. Knowledge about the strategies and political priorities of EU-MS concerning mediation could also become an element of internal service provision; for example through including information about EU MS strategies and approaches to mediation and dialogue in training courses and coaching sessions or by incorporating into mission instructions requests for coordination and harmonisation with EU-MS-led or supported mediation activities during field visits.

### 3.7. Sustainability

*Will the EEAS be in a position to continue with mediation and dialogue support activities after the MSPP has been terminated?*

This question cannot be fully answered as it is beyond the scope of this evaluatory review. Nevertheless some points concerning the future activities of the MST will be discussed in this section.

The envisaged integration of the MST's budget into the regular budget of the EEAS provides for a longer-term perspective regarding the strengthening of EU mediation and dialogue capabilities and sends the signal that the EEAS has adopted greater ownership of mediation as an instrument for use in engagement in conflict prevention. Such a step can also help create a kind of "community-of-practice" within the EEAS as well as across EU institutions dealing with conflict prevention and peacebuilding and can help to further spread awareness and good practice as regards the role that mediation and political dialogue can play in different sections of the EU institutions. This more structural approach to promoting mediation should not, however, take precedence over other conflict prevention activities as underlined by several interviewees. It

should rather help to profile conflict prevention more widely, encompassing all instruments involved, and to develop a vehicle that opens doors to more strategic engagement in external action through mediation.

More operationally, there were also views on the type of activities that a follow-up to the MSPP should prioritise in order to incorporate mediation and conflict prevention into the organisation in the long term. Interviewees acknowledged the usefulness of providing advice, providing expertise in support of mediation and dialogue processes and organising training sessions, preferably at headquarters level for headquarters staff as well as for EU Delegation staff ahead of their posting. Coaching sessions in Delegations were considered useful provided that they could link up with on-going EU-led or EU-supported mediation and dialogue processes.

Questions were raised about the production of an extensive database compiling knowledge products such as lessons learnt, case studies, handbooks, etc. One interviewee pointed out that a similar database already exists at the UN (the United Nations Peacemaker Databank). This is an online support tool for international peacemaking professionals that contains case studies, best practice information, toolkits, etc. While there was no question as to the need for a good knowledge base that could support mediation, doubts were expressed as to whether the EEAS would have the ability in the long term to produce and maintain such a database against potentially high costs. The evaluation team reviewed the UN website and concluded that there is indeed valuable information available but that there remains a need to produce more EU-related knowledge products that highlight experience in the different roles that the EU has undertaken in support of mediation (see Annex 7).

### 3.8. Effectiveness

*Does the pilot project show results and outcomes in line with the overall objectives set for the MSPP?*

In view of the limited time period in which activities initiated by the MSPP can be assessed, this question cannot be answered fully. The tentative reply would be that K2/MST is on the right track, that certain parts of the EEAS as well as some EU Delegations could address conflict prevention and peacebuilding more effectively, but that there are no signs that the MSPP has had a wide-ranging institutional impact so far.

#### 3.8.1. Structural issues

The review to date has brought to light one or two structural issues in relation to the effectiveness of this internal service which will accompany the MST throughout its next steps.

Firstly, the effectiveness of a service that is complementary to the geo-desks depends on the political priority setting per country or region. The earlier the MST is brought into the process by leadership as well as by geo-divisions, the more effectively the objectives of strengthening mediation capacities within the organisation can be pursued. As the MST cannot impose itself vis-à-vis the priorities set by the geo-desks, it needs to invest in relationship building, using windows of opportunity to engage and work through informal contacts where possible. In the absence of a full understanding of the political orientations on the role mediation should play within EEAS external action this approach can be tedious and can hamper the overall effectiveness of the MST's engagement.

Secondly, there is a limit in terms of time and resources that the MST can attribute to particular mediation-related support activities, as highlighted by the work with the EU Delegation in Myanmar. Effectiveness is highest if MST staff can work in depth and dedicate full attention to the particular issues of one context. As this is not possible, complementary expertise needs to be mobilised for takeover and follow up that can be

tedious, impede the work process that has been initiated in relation to mediation and thereby reduce effectiveness.

Thirdly, effectiveness can be limited as the MST is only mandated to work with administrative credits, which are meant to benefit the functioning of the EU institutions. The evaluatory review has shown that services provided to EU Delegations, in particular, are most appreciated if linked to the operational sphere. As shown by the example in Box 4 (below), there are limitations in the use of administrative credits that can only be balanced if complementary funding can be mobilised to bridge the gap between MST-supported activities (which are meant to benefit the EU institution) and those that relate to the operational sphere. Moreover, as explained in section 2.3.6, there are different perceptions within the EEAS as regards what constitutes an “administrative activity” versus an “operational activity”. Clarifying these “grey areas” can be tedious and can impact negatively on the work of the MST, particularly if a strict interpretation of financial regulations prevails over the need to strengthen mediation capacities.

Fourthly, the narrow conceptual understanding of mediation and the misunderstanding of its relationship with complementary conflict prevention actions within the EEAS leads to decreased effectiveness, as the following case shows: the MSPP could not use funds to support a seminar organised under the heading ‘conflict analysis’ (despite the event being meant to highlight the complementarity between conflict analysis and mediation) because the seminar was entered in the system under a heading that did not spell out its relationship to mediation.

### **3.8.2. Effectiveness of MSPP-funded activities**

The following observations support the evaluation team’s overall finding that the MST is on the right track in pursuing its overall objective. It must however be noted that the findings from interviews, the e-survey (see Box 4, and for more information Annex 8) and feedback forms are indicative and should not in themselves lead to the conclusion that there have been pan-institutional benefits as a result of the MSPP.

The coaching sessions were effective insofar as they could forge linkages with the operational tasks of the EU Delegation staff as regards their work with partner countries or the wider regions in which they are active. Similarly, effectiveness increased with the level of interaction and preparation between the MST, the EU Delegation, geo-desks at headquarters and consultants. The same applies to the generation of knowledge products, which need to be timely, to fit with on-going work processes, and to respond to concrete demands from the operational side. Initial less successful experiences concerning the preparation of the EU Delegations in Zimbabwe were taken on board by the MST and dealt with differently and successfully in relation to other geographical regions, as indicated by the feedback forms from the coaching sessions. Other experiences in working with EU Delegations, like the work on Mali that was difficult in the beginning, were also taken on board and turned into an appreciated cooperation between the MST and colleagues dealing with the Sahel crisis.

Meanwhile, the need for linkage with the operational demands of the EU Delegations requires continued attention as the MST has a mandate to assist the Commission in managing operational credits, which requires an engagement with the FPI and/or DG DEVCO to meaningfully connect the different instruments. E.g. in Abuja (Nigeria), the two-day coaching session could have been more effective if funds had been available to transport Nigerian mediators to the event. The administrative credits of the MSPP cannot be used for this purpose and the EU Delegation could not mobilise alternative funds in time (see Box 4). Finally, the general perception of coaching and training is that it is most effective when targeted at individuals or small groups of staff who are closely involved in particular mediation and dialogue processes,

but less so if delivered – as more general training – to a wider group of staff. Training on mediation could also be effective if delivered to staff as part of their briefing for a new job or posting at an EU Delegation.

#### Box 5: Lessons learnt from a coaching session in Nigeria

The following quote from the mission report on the coaching sessions organised in Abuja between 3 and 6 July illustrates certain limitations that the MST encounters in working with administrative credits:

**“3. Planning and funding for participation of local resource persons:** As part of preparatory conversations with the Delegation, the idea had been raised to invite two participants from the Kaduna Interfaith Dialogue and Mediation Centre on day 2 in order to share local experiences of mediation practice, in the context of a session on local capacity-building processes. ... Unfortunately, on this occasion it was not possible to arrange for the Imam and the Pastor’s participation as no funding was available, neither from the EEAS in Brussels nor the Delegation, to cover the costs of their travel from Kaduna to Abuja and their accommodation.” (page 2)

It did, however, prove possible to include within the overall coaching package, a half-day group coaching for EU Delegation representatives together with 11 Nigerian stakeholders, including representatives from faith-based organisations, civil society organisations, the governors office, and academic institutions.

The MST was able to provide useful advisory services to colleagues at headquarters as well as in EU Delegations and the head of K2 was able to use valuable information obtained through the work of the MST for inputs into senior management meetings as well as for exchanges and meetings with the leadership of the EEAS. It is, however, not clear to what extent this has helped raise full awareness throughout the system of the benefits of using mediation and dialogue as a strategic instrument of EU external action. There are however indications that the inputs were valued and that staff of K2/MST have been invited to follow-up meetings and other high-level exchanges on other topics. Feedback from the e-survey also indicates that the advisory services were very highly appreciated and have helped to address conflict prevention more effectively.

The outreach and regular exchanges held between the MST and other EU institutions, the UN, and NGOs on mediation were highly appreciated by those who could benefit from this interaction, for example the meetings on Mali and the Sahel convened by K2/MST. Stakeholders from inside as well as outside the EU institutions would however find it useful if the MST could organise such meetings on a more regular basis. The limited timeframe and resources of the project, however, did not allow for wider outreach across the various EU institutions dealing with conflict prevention. Such an outreach could, for example, enhance awareness among geo-desks at DG DEVCO of the different funding instruments involved in mediation-related activities and how to use them.<sup>19</sup>

Nothing can be said so far about the mobilisation of external expertise and the production of knowledge products; both activities having only just started at the time of writing this document. However, in view of comments made on the use of MSPP funds, the issue of overlap between projects that facilitate access to expertise with complementary funding instruments needs to be monitored. One apparent “grey area” was the use of MSPP funds for the fact-finding and coaching mission to Madagascar. The mission was to examine how the question of amnesty is addressed in on-going negotiations led by SADC (with a view to developing potential future tools for the EEAS) and to provide coaching to the EU Delegation. Some interviewees noted that if such a mission was meant primarily to serve the operational purposes of the EU, i.e. support to SADC role in the Madagascar process, this would be an inappropriate use of MSPP funds.

<sup>19</sup> Funding for mediation is permitted, for example, under: the Early Response Mechanism of the APF that is at the disposal of the AU and RECs, and the IfS includes the Policy Advice Mediation Facility (PAMF) and the European Instrument for Democratisation and Human Rights (EIDHR) that has calls for proposals, including for NGOs on issues relating to mediation and dialogue.

Others wrongly believed that support to SADC could be a primary purpose of an activity funded by the MSPP since this was related to a wider conflict prevention objective and thereby to mediation in a wider sense.. To the benefit of operating effectively, there is a need to shape a common view among EEAS staff on how to deal with such cases in the future while also recognising the need to remain within the boundaries of the MST's mandate.

Finally, the MSPP helped to profile the work of K2 within the house and to place greater emphasis on the overall importance of conflict prevention as an approach to external action. While there is no quantitative data to support this finding, it is worth mentioning as it was highlighted during various interviews with EEAS staff.

#### Box 6: Pointers from the e-survey<sup>20</sup>

- *Generic issues:* In more than 50% of cases knowledge of K2/MST came from colleagues or supervisors within the EEAS; to a lesser extent (40%) respondents were directly contacted by K2/MST.
- *Relevance and added value:* More than 60% of respondents found that inputs provided by K2/MST proved relevant and helped enhance the quality of their on-going work. The survey showed that K2/MST inputs helped enable a better understanding of mediation, though in some cases such knowledge had not been applied in the immediate follow-up.
- *Quality:* Almost all respondents evaluated the quality of inputs provided by the MST or mobilised through it as positive.
- *Efficiency:* Services provided by K2/MST proved professional and were deemed high-quality. However the lack of a mission budget for K2/MST staff to accompany coaching missions or to work with EU staff in the field impacted on the efficiency of the work. Almost 90% of respondents agreed on the added value of K2/MST as an in-house service provider if compared to international agencies, Member States' capacity or NGOs. Almost 80% assessed the level of coordination between K2/MST, geo-desks and EU Delegations as good.
- *Lessons learnt:* Interaction with the EU Delegations was rated highly, and suggestions were made to more prominently incorporate the experiences of K2/MST into the training of EU Delegation staff. Suggestions were also made for K2/MST to develop guidance material for use in helping to strengthen the operational aspects of supporting mediation. K2/MST should also reach out to an EU institution-wide level beyond the EEAS and make use of practical experience gathered through the work of DG DEVCO and the FPI.
- *Future outcomes:* The survey shows general appreciation of the quality of inputs provided by K2/MST. All respondents agreed on the strategic importance of mediation in EU external action and would recommend the work of K2/MST to other colleagues.

### 3.9. Summing up

The evaluation team can summarise the following from the assessment.

**Relevance:** The MSPP fulfils a relevant role. The actions executed through the MSPP are overall in line with the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)* and the requests of the budgetary authorities, as listed in the EU 2012 budget. While the programme is small and unable to reach a level of operation capable of transforming wider thinking and action with regard to mediation and conflict prevention across the entire EEAS and all EU Delegations, it has shown – considering the shortness of its implementation – value as an internal service provider and knowledge hub as well as a catalyst for gradual change on how mediation is looked at and dealt with. The latter was considered particularly relevant, as there are widespread misperceptions and misunderstandings among EEAS and EU Delegation staff of the role

<sup>20</sup> The percentages reported are approximate as not all respondents to the survey completed the entire questionnaire. Respondents included a number of EUSRs and Heads of EU Delegation.

mediation can play as an element of wider conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches. Respondents also underlined the potential future relevance of the MST to the wider strengthening of internal EU mediation capacities. Viewed from a distance, the gradual change that the MSPP was able to mobilise may not be apparent given the limited scope and field of action within which the MST can perform; however a closer examination tells a different story and those who have been in contact with K2/MST generally confirm this picture.

**Effectiveness:** K2/MST staff proceeded efficiently and pragmatically in setting up this project. Given the institutional unpreparedness of the EEAS to implement such a project and the various management issues that had to be solved within the house (including the mobilisation of additional human resources, the need to obtain permission to authorise funds and the establishment of financial control mechanisms), the project got off the ground relatively quickly. Staff made use of personal contacts and of arising opportunities to advertise the services that the MST could provide among colleagues within the EEAS. In addition the MST reached out to colleagues at the UN and to other EU institutions. Unfortunately, the capacities of the MST were too limited to systematically connect to all Divisions of the EEAS, to respond to the various genuine demands from EU Delegations (in particular those from Latin America) or to provide advisory services to colleagues in DG DEVCO where interviewees identified an urgent need to provide advice on mediation and political dialogue, in particular to geo-desks.

**Intermediate outcomes (impact):** Given the shortness of the pilot project, the extent to which the EEAS' internal capacities to purposefully engage in mediation and dialogue have been strengthened cannot really be determined. However, the evaluatory review could detect some "traces of evidence" of the effect the MSPP has had on the EEAS. At the operational level, the delivery of coaching sessions and the provision of advisory services led to demand for more inputs among both EU Delegations and senior ranks within the EEAS. At the institutional level, there are signs of growing ownership in support of mediation and dialogue as instruments for external action, such as on-going discussions concerning the establishment of a mechanism through which mediation can be better supported operationally through IfS funding. This gradual enhancement of ownership was one of the concepts based on which the budgetary authorities financed the MSPP.

**Added value:** An assessment of whether the MSPP could add value to what EU Member States, international organisations and other external actors are undertaking in relation to mediation and dialogue activities was beyond the scope of this evaluatory review. From interviews there appears to be broad agreement that the MST, being placed within the EEAS, is exposed to work processes, has access to information and contacts, and has the capacity to provide services within the institution that an outsourced service (e.g. an NGO) could not utilise or, in the case of service provision, could not achieve to the level of an internal facility. Going beyond the scope of this evaluatory review, several respondents raised questions as to the added value of the EU as an international actor in mediation. The desire was expressed to more precisely clarify where the EU sees its added value, geographically as well as practically, vis-à-vis the work of other partners engaged in mediation and dialogue. There was also a call to critically review the role the EU should play in the area of mediation vis-à-vis the UN in light of the support it provides to the UN.

**Complementarity:** The MST took into account complementary activities on mediation and dialogue executed by the UN and paid particular attention to the EU's relationship with the UN against an overall changing context in which the EU's role has evolved from funder to partner in the area of mediation. Regular contacts at work floor level have helped to clarify operational questions arising in selected crisis countries although questions remain as to the EU's relative limited use of the UN's MSU standby team that should be further investigated. The MST has so far paid little attention to the complementarity of its action

with those of EU Member States as this would have gone beyond the scope and resources of the MSPP; however, there is agreement that effort should be made in the future to more extensively consider the different approaches and activities undertaken by EU Member States.

**Sustainability:** The envisaged integration of the MST's budget into the regular budget of the EEAS provides for a longer-term perspective regarding the strengthening of EU mediation and dialogue capabilities and sends the signal that the EEAS has adopted greater ownership of mediation as an instrument for use in engagement in conflict prevention. In terms of operations, the type of activities that the MST has performed should be continued, although efforts should be made to more closely link the coaching sessions provided to EU Delegations with the operations of on-going EU-led or EU-supported mediation and dialogue processes. The production of knowledge products should be continued insofar as they deal with EU-specific topics, although the MST should be aware of the future costs of maintaining a knowledge database and should make use of already existing (UN-maintained) databases to the extent possible.

**Effectiveness:** In view of the short period of the MSPP, and the relatively few activities, outputs and outcomes that can be looked at, the dataset underpinning this assessment is limited. The evaluation team could distil five "take-home observations" concerning the effectiveness of the MSPP:

Firstly, activities aiming to strengthen EU mediation and dialogue capacities are overall on track, have been well achieved and are in line with the spirit of the *Concept (2009)* and the *Council Conclusions (2011)*. There are several "traces of evidence" indicating that the activities undertaken and supported by the MST are of an added value and have responded to the remarks in the 2012 EU budget that formed the overall objectives for the MSPP.

Secondly, while the MST was able to reach out to a number of staff in EEAS headquarters and to EU Delegations via intense networking and a generally good level of internal communication, the project was too small to bring benefits to all concerned EEAS divisions, all EU Delegations that have requested inputs, the Commission, and DG DEVCO.

Thirdly, regular networking and cooperation with non-EU institutional actors, i.e. the UN, EU-MS and NGOs, can enhance effectiveness as long as it is i) embedded in a strategic approach pursued by K2/MST and ii) well coordinated and supported by staff in the EEAS and EU Delegations who are dealing with the operational side of mediation and dialogue.

Fourthly, K2/MST pursued the aims of the MSPP organically which was the best approach to follow given the context of institutional unpreparedness in which the project had to be implemented. This carried the risk of the MST becoming side-tracked by requests that were both too numerous and too varied, and was challenging to manage coherently given the MST's limited experience.

Fifthly, appreciation for MSPP-supported activities was highest where the MST could establish effective connections with EU operations supporting or leading on mediation and dialogue. This is not always an easy task given the limitations imposed by working with administrative credits. Effectiveness also increases parallel to the level of interaction and preparation between the MST, the EU Delegations, geo-desks at headquarters and other partners involved, such as consultants and NGOs.

These observations are supported by the results of the e-survey that the evaluation team conducted among 50 senior officials working in EU Delegations and at headquarters (though it should be noted that it

is not possible to draw firm conclusions based on this limited dataset). From the 13 replies received, almost 90% of respondents agreed on the added value of K2/MST as an in-house service provider when compared to international agencies, Member State capacity or NGOs. Almost 80% assessed the level of coordination between K2/MST, geo-desks and EU Delegations as good. More than 60% of respondents confirmed that inputs provided by K2/MST had helped to enhance the quality of their on-going work. All respondents agreed on the strategic importance of mediation in EU external action and would recommend the work of K2/MST to their colleagues.

## 4. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1. Key findings and conclusions

Drawing on the above assessment, the evaluation team presents and discusses its key findings along the following eight clusters:

#### 4.1.1. Limited ownership of Council orientations and institutional preparedness to deal with mediation required considerable investments by the MST

The principal political guidance and mandate for the MSPP come from the *Concept (2009)*, the *Council Conclusions (2011)* and the remarks to the 2012 EU budget presented above. While the *Concept (2009)* provides general orientation on how to engage, it was perceived by some interviewees as a document that should be updated to reflect the more specific views of the EEAS on how to address mediation under the new institutional setup and how the institution itself should address both conflict prevention overall, and mediation more specifically. Interviews held also suggested that political orientation on part of the Council is not yet fully shared and owned within the EEAS. While it is difficult to judge from this evaluatory review how widespread this view is, it points at the need to translate more thoroughly the political messages contained in these three documents into operational guidance. The guidance note on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security in programming, which exists in a draft version and is currently being tested through specific training workshops, is a useful step toward filling this gap. Beyond this, internal communication and orientation from a higher level within the EU (e.g. from the EEAS Corporate Board or the inter-service Conflict Prevention Group, chaired the Head of Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments on the MST and how its services can be used could help open doors at the operational level toward dealing with mediation in conflict prevention, across geographical divisions as well as EU Delegations.

In the absence of full ownership of political orientation on mediation as a mechanism to deal with conflict (which is to be expected for a new institution), the MSPP was inserted into the EEAS using funds allocated by the EU budgetary authorities and had to find its way in an organisational context that was undergoing full construction. This limited institutional awareness generally hampered the visible preparedness of geo-desks and EU Delegations, in particular, to work with the MST. The project's services are both new to them and somewhat atypical as there are no other internal services with dedicated budget provision in place that aim to strengthen particular capabilities for external action. Neither were they easily understood in terms of several other financing instruments, e.g. the EDF (APF) and IfS, that enable support to mediation and dialogue processes. The MST managed to overcome this hurdle in a number of geo-desks and EU Delegations, though only through considerable investment such as regular networking, visits, meetings, (informal) discussions, emails, etc. Meanwhile, the MST is seen as an added value by some parts of the EEAS, as will be explained below, while there are other parts of the organisation that have not yet learnt about the type of services that the MST can provide and how it could benefit their work.

***In conclusion, the MST did well to invest considerable time and energy in tackling the limited institutional awareness within the EEAS of mediation as one of several mechanisms to deal with conflict. The MST also had to address limited ownership among EEAS operational staff of the political orientation of the Council on mediation. These limitations reduced the effectiveness of the MST's work to some extent but could be overcome by targeting its work successfully to a limited number of geo-desks and divisions. This approach helped to gradually create awareness of the added value of the MST in some quarters of the EEAS, including the leadership of the organisation.***

#### **4.1.2. The MST is a useful complementary instrument to pursuing mediation and conflict prevention within the EU but its potential is not always understood**

The particular nature of the MSPP and the way it was implemented proved useful in a number of the cases that were studied by the evaluation team in more detail. The project followed an organic and learning-by-doing approach, making use of opportunities to meet and talk to other colleagues, advertised the services that the MSPP could provide informally as well as during formal events and thereby spread the news of its existence and mandate. The engagement with the crisis in Mali that unfolded as of early 2012 was less successful in the first part of the year due to a number of factors as explained above. The same was true in the case of Zimbabwe where deficits in preparation led to mixed outcomes. However these experiences are part of a learning process and can be useful if lessons are drawn from them and acted upon, which did indeed occur in the case of K2/MST.

The nature of the MSPP is rather atypical for the EEAS in that it has some modest funds at its disposal that allow it to support internal EU capacity to deal with mediation and dialogue more effectively, while also being dependent on the requests of geo-desks and EU Delegations, to which the MST must respond using the different services it can provide. In performing this function of an internal facility that can help to “oil the wheel”, concrete demands must be formulated by the internal clients that are based on a well-understood mandate of the MST and the scope of work it can support. Equally, the MST needs to be sufficiently informed as to the type of work and processes (including their timing) that need to be supported in order to make a meaningful contribution. These two dynamics are not always easy to match.

Different interviewees as well as replies from the e-survey underlined the relevance of this internal service as well as its potential to become more useful both to them and to other parts of the EU, although staff from geo-desks also acknowledged that they did not always have a full picture of the added value that such an internal service could provide, or enough time to fully appraise which specific services of the MST could be of use at a particular point in time. Once a track record of successful collaboration was built up, however, demands were formulated more easily.

While the MST did well in offering its services to different parts of the organisation, its capacity is limited and does not allow it to discuss, on a pan-institutional level, the type of work the MST could do, how to understand mediation, and how to support mediation processes. Neither does its existing capacity allow it to respond simultaneously to a wide range of demands, which explains the limited knowledge of this project to date, as well as the institution’s persistent general misunderstanding of mediation and how this can be used in conflict prevention.

***In conclusion, responses from interviews and to the e-survey underline the importance and added value that internal as well as external stakeholders attribute to the existence of the MST and its service within the EEAS in terms of strengthening mediation capacities. The quality of the MST’s work and its approach are overall well appreciated. To be an effective service provider, however, the MST needs to well understand the work and needs of staff dealing with conflict prevention in particular countries or regions. Equally, staff at geo-desks or EU Delegations need to be given the opportunities and time to learn about the MST and the added value that this facility can bring to their work. This matching of demand and supply took place successfully in a number of cases but could not be achieved at a pan-institutional level given both the brevity of the MSPP and the limited resources available to the MST.***

#### **4.1.3. The MST contributes to creating strengthened expertise on mediation within the EEAS and EU Delegations, but not yet across all EU institutions**

The interviews, feedback forms to coaching sessions, and replies to the e-survey indicate that the activities undertaken by the MST were overall well received by colleagues at headquarters and EU Delegations. There are indications that expertise has been strengthened among staff working in certain divisions of the EEAS as well as in selected EU Delegations and that the support provided has assisted colleagues to do better in their work. This took place through wider training courses, such as the September 2012 event in Brussels, one-to-one coaching sessions (which took place during several missions) and in smaller settings, such as a phone conference held on Mali in November 2012 during which staff from headquarters and the EU Delegation discussed with an external mediator possible options for using mediation in the current crisis in this country.

These traces of evidence, as they are referred to in the review, were gathered from selected colleagues within the EEAS and a number of EU Delegations, which were the focus of the MST's work. K2/MST did not have the capacity to reach out systematically to colleagues in DG DEVCO, the Commission or other EU institutions that are supporting or are involved in mediation and dialogue. Several sources indicated the need to reach out more widely, in particular to the geo-desks in DG DEVCO, which generally have little knowledge and experience of mediation and political dialogue (according to different sources), although they are involved with instruments that can fund mediation more systematically, such as the Early Response Mechanism (ERM) of the APF, the EIDHR and geographical programmes. However, these expectations can only be met systematically if complementary resources are made available within these institutions to follow up on the *Concept (2009)*.

***In conclusion, the MSPP was set up with the intention of being a first step toward an increase in the Union's internal capacities to deal with mediation, which can be considered to have been well achieved given the short time within which the programme could act and the limited resources it had at its disposal. The evaluatory review could find "traces of evidence", as they are referred to in the review, that show that expertise on mediation has been strengthened among staff working in certain divisions of the EEAS as well as in selected EU Delegations. However, K2/MST had insufficient operational capacity to reach out more widely to other EU institutions. Respondents underlined the need to do this more systematically in the follow-up to the present MSPP and to include in particular the geo-desks in DG DEVCO who are involved with instruments that can fund mediation.***

#### **4.1.4. Strengthening expertise on mediation and dialogue is most effective when also linked to operational activities**

The current institutional setup of the EEAS allows the organisation to fund its work with administrative credits, i.e. funds that can be used for internal purposes. This equally applies to the MSPP, which has a mandate to strengthen the internal capacities of the EEAS and EU Delegations but which must remain distinct from activities that relate to country processes or which form part of operations for the benefit of their parties supported by the EU. This line is not always easy to draw for a facility that must show its relevance to the organisation and which has been confronted with several requests from desks at headquarters and in EU Delegations to engage further in the operational sphere; e.g. to expand EU Delegation staff coaching sessions to actors from the country in which mediation-related activities are taking place.

A strict interpretation of the MSPP's mandate to focus exclusively on the capacity needs of colleagues can lead to reduced effectiveness if no complementary funding for operational activities can be mobilised or linked up with MSPP-funded activities in a timely manner. However, this needs to be planned well ahead

and coordinated with several other desks, which is a potentially cumbersome process. Nonetheless, feedback from coaching sessions indicates that staff are particularly appreciative of the sessions if they can be linked to the operational realities of the context in which staff work, including discussing possible follow-up actions that could be funded through external cooperation instruments. From an effectiveness perspective, this would call for a less rigorous interpretation of the MST's mandate in order that the coaching session with EU Delegation staff could, e.g., be extended by one or two days during which EU staff can exchange with local mediators on.

Given the Financial Regulations and the mandate given to the EEAS to work with administrative credits only, there is a risk of interpreting the MST's mandate too rigorously as indicated in some interviews.

***In conclusion, feedback from interviews and coaching sessions indicates that the services offered by the MST are considered most effective when linked to the operational realities and processes of a division, a geo-desk or a desk at the EU Delegation. Experience in implementing the MSPP shows that this can be a challenge, as the administrative credits the MST is mandated to use are meant solely to benefit the functioning of the EU institution and not that of the partners and processes with which EU staff are involved. This requires the MST to coordinate with colleagues and to search for complementary funding mechanisms that bridge the gap between services in internal capacity strengthening and operational activities on mediation supported or led by third parties. Where such funding cannot be found in time, the effectiveness of MST support risks becoming reduced.***

#### **4.1.5. Demands from political leadership need to be balanced with those from the operational level**

The MST receives requests for different types of services that are difficult to manage given the existing capacities, resources and time available to project staff. There are demands from political leadership that relate to highly pressing and therefore visible crisis situations, such as the situation in Mali and the Sahel, or in the Middle East. There are also demands from EU Delegations requesting support to build up their capacities in order that they may better accompany mediation and other conflict prevention activities that they support or lead. Finally, there are demands from within headquarters to provide quality assurance and advisory support to colleagues working in less visible conflict prevention contexts, including in mediation and dialogue.

In meeting political-level requests, there are opportunities for higher-level recognition and visibility of the MST as well as opportunities to create more awareness among key policy makers on the role and added value that can be brought by different types of mediation and through their combination with other conflict prevention measures. The MST is aware that such opportunities should not be left unattended. Excessive focus on specific and highly visible conflict situations however entails the risk that the MST will remain relatively unknown on a pan-institutional level and that it becomes drawn away from its wider institutional mandate, i.e. the strengthening of capacities for mediation and dialogue throughout the Union.

The issue of breadth versus depth needs to be managed and balanced in a way that responds to a key concern expressed by those who stood at the cradle of the *Concept (2009)*: how to create knowledge and institutional capacity resulting in greater ownership among EU decision makers so that mediation and other forms of conflict prevention become more systematically and strategically used in external action. For the MST, identifying a means of creating greater ownership could help determine its decisions on how to respond to the different demands described above.

***In conclusion, the more the services of the MST become known and requested, the more the MST must manage demand from different levels of the EEAS as well as EU Delegations. Given the mandate of the MST to create more knowledge and institutional capacity to deal with mediation, this is not easy to manage and creates a certain dilemma given the existence of both bottom-up requests to deal with concrete operational issues, and requests from the leadership of the EEAS to deal with highly visible crisis situations which the organisation has to prioritise. While the MST has dealt with this pragmatically so far, it may find it difficult in the near future to balance the increase in demand that is likely to emerge from all sides.***

#### **4.1.6. Misunderstandings about the concept of mediation and the role of the MST in pursuing mediation and dialogue need to be managed**

The remarks to the 2012 EU budget requested a focus on three types of capacity-strengthening activities: coaching and training, the production of knowledge products and the creation of a roster of experts. The MST followed up on these activities, although a considerable amount of time and energy had to be put into clarifying – at various levels of the organisation but also in EU Delegations – the concept of mediation, its political dimensions, the different tracks of mediation that can be supported or led by the EU, and the fact that mediation is one element of a package of other conflict prevention activities, including early warning and conflict analysis. Implementation also highlighted the presence of highly experienced actors involved in mediation whose expectations about the role of the MST need to be managed.

Often, mediation is seen as an activity performed by the highest political levels, only, that have their own dynamics and that are not linked to complementary processes. Structured coaching sessions can correct such misunderstandings to a certain extent, although learning is particularly effective if it can be embedded in the practical work of staff. The K2/MST could address misunderstandings at headquarters most effectively during participation in meetings or workshops organised by other divisions, or via the mobilisation of external expertise for such events. During field visits, time was reserved for complementary one-to-one coaching sessions and peer exchanges, for which available funds were used flexibly.

However, during each initial contact with desks and EU Delegations, the MST had to invest considerable time in the clarification of its role and mandate, its relationship with on-going support to mediation and conflict prevention activities, and the added value that might be brought by the provision of expertise to an already full staff agenda. Investments were particularly necessary in dealing with less experienced staff who do not have a full understanding of how the EEAS, DG DEVCO and the FPI connect when it comes to mediation and dialogue activities. Where the added value of the MST was recognised, expectations had to be managed as the project can only act to a certain intensity of engagement, as shown by the work done with the EU Delegation in Myanmar. Here, demands placed on the expertise of the MST went beyond the available resources and, with the advice of the MST, steps were taken by the Delegation to mobilise expertise from elsewhere.

***In conclusion, the MST was able to continuously and satisfactorily respond to the considerable misunderstandings it encountered within EU institutions of the concept of mediation and the role that mediation can play within a wider conflict prevention approach. Equally, the MST had to manage unrealistic expectations from staff to assist on a more elaborate scale than was possible. In the absence of specific briefing packages on mediation and on the role of the MST in strengthening mediation capacity, as well as of a set of concise knowledge products (which was not possible to produce in its entirety given the brevity of the MSPP), K2/MST had to invest considerable time in communication and in clarifying its role and mandate during numerous meetings, informal exchanges and advisory talks with staff.***

#### 4.1.7. It is too early to judge the relevance of all MST services and activities

In line with the six areas of work of the MST that the team identified under the reconstructed intervention logic (see section 2.2), findings were collected on the coaching/training sessions, the provision of internal advice and guidance, outreach and relationship building (dealt with in 4.1.8.) and the building up of the necessary legal and administrative infrastructure to run the project. With the exception of information about two low-value contracts (concerning Mali and Syria), nothing can be said about the relevance of creating a body of knowledge and a contract that allows for quick access to expertise, as both these activities had only just started at the time of the evaluatory review.

Interviewees affirmed that both the coaching/training and the provision of internal advice and guidance had been highly relevant, and had been particularly effective when services were linked to the on-going work processes of the geo-desks and EU Delegations at the “right moment”, with the “right type of expertise and quality”, in the “right form”, addressed to the “right audience” and with the “right understanding of the issues at hand”. The same would apply for the provision of knowledge inputs and the mobilisation of external expertise for particular topics, as some interviewees mentioned. This indicates that the range of services which the MST can mobilise or provide itself are relevant in principle, but will be of added value only if there is a good match between demand and supply.

One area that requires particular attention in addition to expertise on mediation and conflict prevention processes is the provision of knowledge and advice about the various EU funding instruments that can be used in supporting mediation, their advantages and limitations, how they can be used and whom to contact for further advice. For a facilitator such as the MST it is necessary to link the creation of awareness and the strengthening of internal knowledge about mediation with advice on how to bridge this with the operational realities faced by staff at the geo-desks and EU Delegations.

The assessment further highlights the relevance of having a knowledgeable administrative and legal capacity established within the MST. Knowledge of the Financial Regulations, how to deal with framework contracts and how to monitor and control projects is more scarcely available in the EEAS than, e.g., within DG DEVCO. K2/MST became aware of the relevance of establishing such a capacity as part of the overall EEAS learning-by-doing approach adapted when setting up a new institution and this, in an ideal scenario, should have been addressed from the beginning of the MSPP. Once this expertise was put in place in March 2012, the project could deliver on its mandate more smoothly.

Questions were raised during interviews as to the level of investment the EEAS should make in the creation of knowledge products. Reference was made to the UN's Peacemaker website which contains a wealth of information, such as modern peace agreements, operational guidance notes, knowledge essays, case studies and fact sheets. The evaluation team's brief review of this website (see Annex 7) shows that there are benefits to be had in working with the material from this service but that there are specific EU-related issues for which tailored knowledge products are potentially relevant to produce and have on file. One such product could be a set of EU experiences in specific fields of mediation that take into account the four mediation-related roles that the EU plays in addition to being directly engaged in mediation and negotiation activities, i.e. promoting, leveraging, supporting and funding mediation and dialogue.

Lastly, an issue raised in several discussions concerned the need to create a roster of experts. The MST has addressed this so far through a small contract due to finish at the end of 2012. More thought should however go into the rationale for setting up such a pool of experts and the scope that should be involved. Firstly, the ToR for the mobilisation of these experts foresees support to staff from EU Delegations or headquarters in relation to mediation processes that cannot easily be split into ‘administrative’ or

'operational' categories. Moreover, there are discussions on-going concerning the establishment of an IfS-funded mechanism through which operational activities in the sphere of mediation and conflict prevention can be supported better and faster. Secondly, a more general question concerns the extent to which local mediation capacities from the partner countries or regions could be drawn more systematically into service provision. This could enable EU Delegation staff, in particular, to better connect to local contexts and to create greater ownership among local mediators looking to address conflict prevention in partnership with the EU.

***In conclusion, the provision of a diverse range of services by the MST can be effective as long as these are provided at the "right moment", with the "right type of expertise and quality", in the "right form", addressed to the "right audience" and with the "right understanding of the issues at hand." The MST is still on a learning curve toward meeting these ambitious goals, although the evaluatory review could find 'traces of evidence' that the provision of coaching sessions and internal advice (in different forms) scored very well among respondents and interviewees as long as it could be linked to the operational realities of EU staff. The review comes too early in the history of the MST's work to assess the relevance of generating knowledge products and of having access to technical expertise to strengthen EEAS capacities on mediation. Another important finding was the importance attributed by the "clients" of the MST to the provision of expertise on mediation, which should be combined with advice and knowledge on the various EU funding instruments that can be used in supporting mediation and how they function.***

#### **4.1.8. Working in partnership with actors outside the EEAS and EU Delegations pays off but needs to be nurtured continuously**

Given the importance of the UN in the area of mediation and the strong ties the EU has with the UN as a funder of the UN's conflict prevention activities, the mobilisation of MST-expertise with a solid background in working with the UN was a well-considered investment. Contact at the working level with colleagues from the UN is close and highly relevant, particularly in clarifying upcoming questions at field level and identifying potential problems. However, there are concerns about the limited deployment of experts from the UN's MSU standby team that investigation as this standby team is funded in the absence of a similar EU mediation facility.

K2/MST was also successful in reaching out to its counterpart division in DG DEVCO, the Fragility and Crisis Management Unit. Despite a constructive working relationship between the MST and DG DEVCO at the operational level, the capacities of the MST have not been sufficient to reach out to geo-desks in DG DEVCO on a systematic basis; an issue that should be more closely addressed in the future given the importance of these geo-desks when dealing with EU Delegations.

There has been very limited contact between K2/MST and EU-MS and their initiatives to lead or support mediation initiatives. This deficit was mentioned in several interviews although interlocutors also recognised that working with EU-MS would have gone beyond the scope of the current MSPP. Suggestions have been put forward for engagement in knowledge networking and for creating a community of practice on mediation among different actors at the level of the EU, EU-MS and NGOs that are worth exploring and that would match the facilitator role that the MST should play in strengthening internal EU institution capacities on mediation.

K2/MST has also deepened existing relationships with NGOs and round-table sessions, such as the meetings on Mali and the Sahel that were valued as particularly relevant to the sharing of knowledge and the creation of new insights. Requests were made for the regular organisation of such events, which would

also enable NGOs to better understand both the internal dynamics and the constraints that must be dealt with by their colleagues at the EEAS. The range of services that different NGOs can provide also brought questions to the table as to the relevance of creating a European Institute for Peace and the extent to which such a new knowledge hub and facility to mobilise expertise could add value to the existing range of services that are already on the market. Interviewees pointed out that policy makers should not focus too heavily on the creation of a new organisation that would have to function outside the existing EU structures and that would risk to function in parallel to existing organisations. At this particular point in time, it is pivotal to further strengthen internal processes and capacities on mediation and dialogue with a view to assigning conflict prevention, and mediation in particular, a greater priority in external action.

***In conclusion, given the brevity of the implementation period and the limited resources available to the MSPP, the MST allocated satisfactory time to networking with outside partners and cooperation with the UN, although much more will need to be done in the future before effective and lasting synergies to strengthen mediation capacities can be created. Exchanges with the UN and other outreach activities in which outside stakeholders were involved were rated positively in interviews, though there are concerns about the limited draw down of expertise in the UN MSU's standby team that should be investigated. Effectiveness will also grow if linkages and knowledge networks can be established on conflict prevention issues in which staff from other EU institutions as well as EU-MS can be involved; this is an issue that the MST is planning to address in the near future.***

## 4.2. Recommendations

EEAS/K2 will further pursue the activities initiated during the MSPP. The work of the MST will be integrated into the regular budget of the EEAS/K2 as of January 2013 with a total of € 500,000 for capacity-strengthening activities. The following recommendations assume that K2 will be in a position to follow up on the MSPP and emphasise the issues that the MST should take into account as of 2013.

### **Recommendation 1:**

*K2/MST should discuss, with the senior management of the EEAS, possibilities to provide further operational guidance and information on i) the various steps the institution is taking to translate the existing political orientation on strengthening mediation capacities, as manifested in the Concept (2009) and the Council Conclusions (2011), into operations and ii) how the EEAS intends to further pursue mediation within wider conflict prevention efforts in external action.*

Such internal communication, in the form of a letter or a note, could help the MST work more effectively with staff at geo-desks as well as EU Delegations, draw the attention of said actors to the relevance of mediation in external action, create greater pan-institutional ownership of the political aims of the *Council Conclusions (2011)*, alert stakeholders of particular knowledge products or operational guidance notes, and inform on the services that the MST can offer in support of strengthening mediation capacities.

### **Recommendation 2:**

*K2/MST has overall been successful in pursuing mediation and conflict prevention within the EEAS by following an organic and learning-by-doing approach whereby opportunities were used to communicate and discuss the relevance of the topic during a series of meetings and informal contacts at various levels. This approach of working more horizontally and complementarily to other units of the EEAS should be continued, although it is important to avoid the MST becoming too deeply drawn into a particular country dossier that should rather be the responsibility of a geo-desk officer or of staff at the EU Delegation.*

To find the right balance between breath and depth, the MST (and possibly other K2 staff) could hold an internal one-day, quarterly retreat to review the variety of requests received and how the team has dealt with them, to identify gaps, and to learn from good practice. A periodic retreat to reflect and verify whether the MST's work programme is in line with the strategic objectives of the MST can be very beneficial to a group of people that is performing a facilitating and knowledge-brokering role within a new EU institution for which there is no handbook.

**Recommendation 3:**

*K2/MST should extend its reach to all EU institutions dealing with conflict prevention, with a particular focus on the desk officers at DG DEVCO and FPI that are involved with instruments that can fund mediation more systematically.*

Given the limited operational capacity of the MST, its outreach to other desks needs to be well targeted and planned; potentially in the form of specific conflict prevention and mediation training/coaching sessions that relate to a particular region or country and are held periodically, thus accompanying a conflict situation throughout a longer period. Such sessions should be organised in cooperation with the institutional counterparts of the MST, such as the Fragility and Crisis Management Division in DG DEVCO, and should include modules on the strategic use of the different financial instruments involved in supporting mediation.

**Recommendation 4:**

*4.1: To enhance effectiveness, the MST should consider, from the outset of a service provision, the various options as regards how a capacity strengthening activity initiated by the MST can be linked with follow-up, or with on-going mediation-related activities that are funded through other instruments.*

This could be done, e.g., through coaching sessions organised at EU Delegation level in order that the inputs provided through the MST can be better connected to the operational sphere of the EU Delegation and country processes.

*4.2: For capacity strengthening activities that could be interpreted as "operational", but that benefit the functioning of the EU institution, K2/MST should make efforts to clarify the limit of its mandate in support of mediation capacities and the type of activities it can still fund through the use of administrative credits only.*

The MST should be prepared to discuss such issues with staff, at HQ level as well as in EU Delegations, who are involved with the funding of operations that support mediation activities.

**Recommendation 5:**

*It can be expected that K2/MST will be confronted with a range of requests from different levels and areas of the EEAS and EU Delegations that is difficult to respond to in its entirety. Identifying a solution to the dilemma of prioritisation should be guided via a response to the question: "Which activities will help to create greater institutional ownership of the topic in order that mediation and other conflict prevention mechanisms become more systematically and strategically used in the EU external action?"*

Insofar as this solution has not yet been identified, the new Head of K2 and the MST could consider the creation of a small consultative group (that also involves stakeholders from outside K2) to enable periodic reflection on the strategic setting of priorities.

**Recommendation 6:**

*In view of a widespread misunderstanding of the concept of mediation and how it can be used strategically as one element of a package of conflict prevention measures, K2/MST should invest further time and resources in the promotion of internal communication that goes beyond participation in meetings and engagement through (informal) advisory exchanges with staff.*

The MST could add to its current internal communication approach a briefing package that outlines relevant policies, the role and approach of the MST, and the type of services it can provide. The MST could also make use of the *capacity4dev.eu* website which is a learning platform hosted by DG DEVCO and enables the exchange of information with internal and/or external stakeholders (the website is open to staff beyond DG DEVCO). Using a workspace on this platform could also enable more effective linkages with geo-desks within DG DEVCO as the website is widely used within this organisation.

**Recommendation 7:**

*7.1: K2/MST should, in principle, continue with the range of services it provides but place more emphasis on understanding the full conflict prevention process of a particular country or regional context, in order that its services can effectively respond to both operational realities and the requests of its “clients. However, the MST should avoid duplication and should not offer services that can be mobilised through other sources. This requires the MST to be fully aware of the quality and range of services, including knowledge products, that are currently on the market.*

Concerning the generation of knowledge products, the focus should be on producing material that deals with EU-specific issues and on ensuring that good use is made of existing databases and websites that already compile valuable information on mediation and conflict prevention. The MST should also continue with the commissioning of brief knowledge products, such as a thematic report or a country situation brief, which can be quickly produced and fed into the work of geo-desks and/or EU Delegations.

In view of on-going discussions on the establishment of an IfS-funded mechanism through which mediation can be supported better and faster, the MST should assess, together with staff at the FPI, for which situations it makes sense to use the services of the MST (“access to expertise”) and for which situations the IfS is better placed to fund an activity.

*7.2: The MST should look into options to further streamline the management of its financial, administrative and legal infrastructure with a view to reducing transaction costs.*

The MST has plans to work through a consortium that can help provide various services through a single contract. This should be explored and lessons learnt from similar experiences, e.g. from the three-year ADM programme that DG DEVCO financed and executed through a consortium to provide methodological support and training programmes on aid delivery methods to the European Commission in Brussels and to EU Delegations.

**Recommendation 8:**

*The MST should build on its contacts, experiences and working relationships with the UN, EU-MS and NGOs in order to intensify cooperation on areas that could not be addressed so far or did not function to their full potential. Given the limited operational capacity of the MST, existing plans to set up and moderate a community of practice on mediation, which could include various stakeholders through knowledge networking, exchange and sharing, should be pursued.*

The contract with the envisaged consortium could include a budget line to fund the organisation of a knowledge network that ensures the following under the leadership of the MST: organisation of a series of knowledge events (such as workshops, e-discussions, seminars) maintenance of the network through short informative briefs on relevant knowledge products and events, maintenance of a blog on the above-mentioned capacity4dev.eu website, collection of the contact details of stakeholders, etc. Effective knowledge networking needs to make use of existing expertise, should be well conceptualised and planned and cannot be done late in the working day by the MST.

The MST should also look into the experience gained through working with the UN's MSU standby team for mediation and why the EU could not make more use of this UN facility (that is itself co-financed by the EU). Given the limited time available for the evaluatory review, the evaluation team could not further investigate this question.

***Final observations – moving from a pilot project to an established MST:***

The pilot project provided time for experimentation and exploration and for building up the resources and structures from where an MST can be formally established in line with the requirements of the 2012 EU Budget. The MST had to set up the project from scratch against limited institutional preparedness to host such a project and was thus drawn into a number of support activities in a rather haphazard and *ad-hoc* manner, without any underlying plan or specifically formulated concept on how to engage strategically. The approach was one of learning by doing and worked out very positively overall.

Following a year of implementation, there is benefit to be had in reflecting from a “bird’s-eye view” on experiences so far and on how to move ahead. Taking the results of the evaluatory review into account, the review team would recommend discussing a slight adaptation to the approach that the MST has taken so far and formulating this in a brief strategic work plan that can be shared with others and which defines the particular role of the MST.

Building on positive MST experience, this slight adaptation would be for the MST to engage somewhat less in the concrete work of geo-desks and EU Delegations and to move further into the role of a knowledge facilitator and broker. The MST would thus be able to define its role as a connector of different stakeholders vertically and horizontally with the EU institutions as well as with outside stakeholders; as a convener of exchanges at the interface of the internal capacity strengthening of mediation and the operational aspects of the EU's engagement in this area; as a resource for strategic expertise and a provider of relevant knowledge on mediation; and as an actor that can pro-actively contribute to the ongoing work of staff at headquarters and EU Delegations and provide suggestions on how to enhance the quality of the work involved. Examples of how to conceptualise the work of a knowledge broker and how to engage as an outsider in processes that come under the responsibility of other actors, are available and can be used by the MST in formulating its own conceptual approach.