



Evaluation of the European Union cooperation with Somalia



Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of a strategic evaluation commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships. The evaluation focused on the European Union's (EU) cooperation with Somalia from 2014 to 2021, including Somaliland, with the aim of providing an overall independent assessment of the EU's past and current cooperation and identifying key lessons to inform future strategies, programs, and actions.

The evaluation covers the EU's international development cooperation with Somalia and assesses its linkages with EU member states and various international actors. It also examines the EU's alignment with the development priorities of the government of Somalia.

The evaluation is timely in view of unfolding international and national challenges and a new Government in place that is committed to reforms and who can make use of the recommendations.

During the evaluation period, Somalia has gone through various political developments, periods of conflict and instability, natural disasters, and limited economic growth.

After nearly EUR 1.6 billion of EU cooperation funding was spent in Somalia from 2014 to 2021, there is a need to know what has been realised and what lessons can be drawn for future EU engagement in the country.

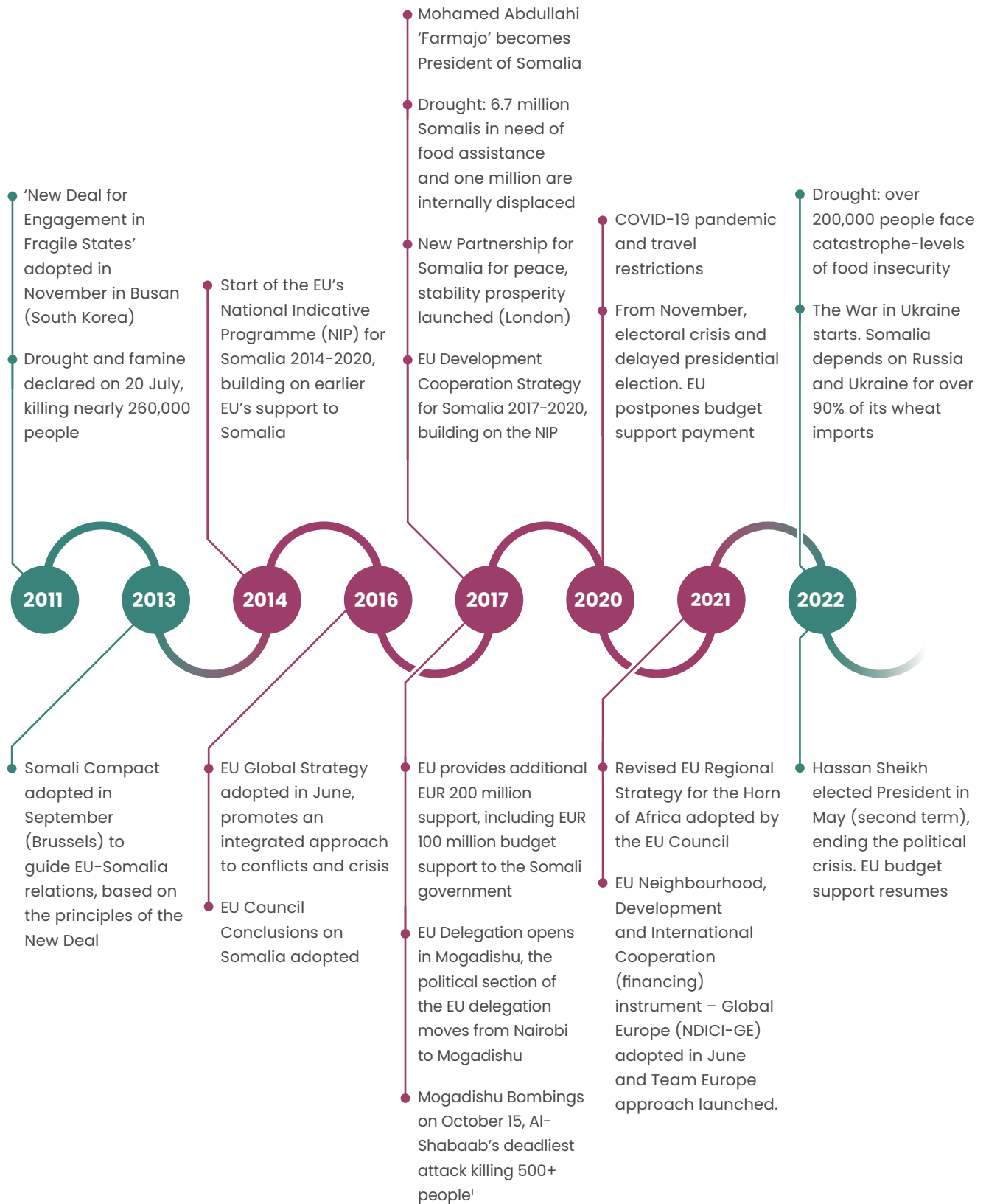
The report identifies several key issues, including the high complexity of engagement in such a fragile and conflict-prone environment. It also emphasises the need for comprehensive and integrated approaches that involve EU services, EU member states, and other international partners. The evaluation highlights the importance of looking at the EU's international development cooperation from a broader perspective that considers experiences at the operational level, policy dimensions, and the wider political context. EU development cooperation is one of several areas in which the EU engages in Somalia.

Looking ahead, learning from the experiences of EU actors may help to further tailor EU support to the dynamic and diverse Somali context, develop more effective and strategic engagements with the government and international partners, create innovative approaches in support of particular sectors, and strengthen the EU's engagement with countries in the region.



[Read the full report on international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu)

Figure 1. Timeline of key events and milestones of EU support to Somalia



● Events during evaluation period 2014-2021 ● Events before and after evaluation period

1. Al Shabaab guerilla and terror attacks occurred throughout the evaluation period including bombings and shootings of civilians in public spaces (hotels, malls, election locations, Mogadishu airport etc.) in Somalia but also Kenya and Ethiopia. More than 4000 civilians have been killed by Al-Shabaab between 2010 and 2020 (ACLEED).

Overall assessment

Considering all elements of this highly complex engagement of the EU in Somalia, the overall assessment of the EU's international development cooperation and its linkages with the actions of other EU services, EU MS and international partners is positive.

Despite having worked in Somalia before, the EU's engagement with Somalia required a 'learning by doing' approach. The EU's involvement in Somalia, largely based on the statebuilding ambitions and objectives of the Somali Compact, became a prominent EU test case for implementing the New Deal.

Following the London Somalia Conference in 2017 and the launch of the EU's Global Strategy in 2016, the period of 2017/2018 witnessed a significant shift in the EU's cooperation

with Somalia, in which the bloc became increasingly more comprehensive and strategic in its engagement.

Despite channelling nearly EUR 1.6 billion of EU funding and humanitarian assistance into Somalia from 2014 to 2021, the actual outcomes and impact fell significantly short of the expected ambitions outlined in the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2014-2020 due to the immense complexity of the Somali context.

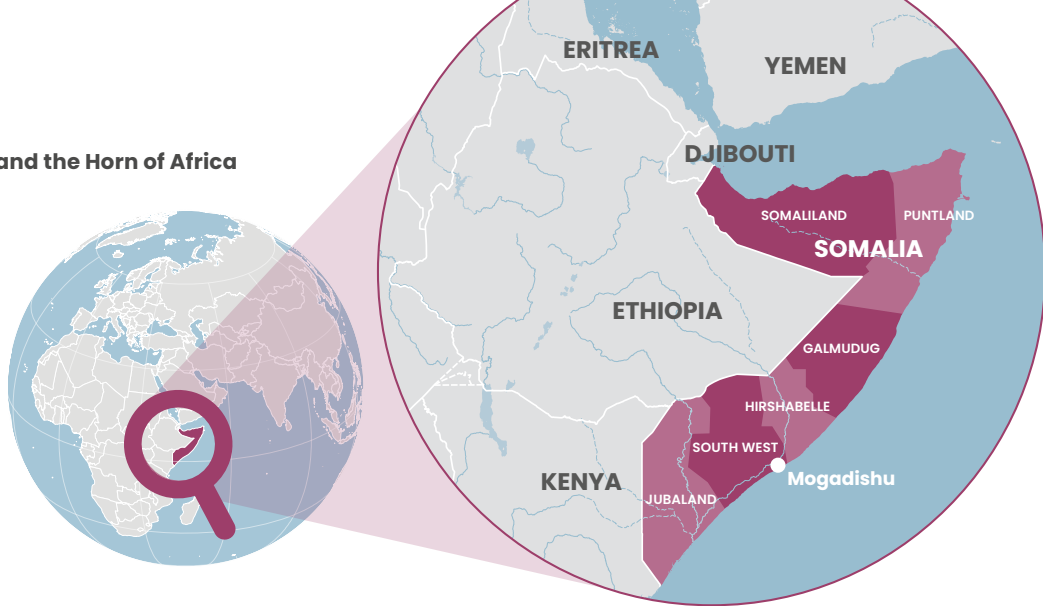
Given Somalia's strategic position in the geopolitically significant Horn of Africa and the importance of promoting regional stability which is of key interest to the EU and EU member states, it is crucial to further prioritise Somalia as a key area of international development cooperation and maintain substantial investments.



Key conclusions

- 1 EU programming has been responsive to Somali and EU priorities overall, but needs an update to account for new contextual realities, country priorities and ways of working.
- 2 The EU deployed an appropriate set of instruments and modalities, including budget support which is an entry point to further enhance the EU's role as a strategic partner for leveraging policy reforms.
- 3 The EU progressively promoted and implemented an integrated approach as of 2017 with the different EU services working more closely together. Collaboration with Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions is gradually improving.
- 4 The EU's institutional arrangements are the result of a learning process but display several dilemmas around staffing, working conditions and EU visibility. High attention was given to flexibility.
- 5 The EU has developed effective synergies with other forms of cooperation and other international development partners, and through the Team Europe approach which offer opportunities to enhance collaboration with EU member states.
- 6 The EU was overall effective in supporting civil society and cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth, human rights and addressing vulnerabilities, with some variations. Conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm principles were integrated less implicitly.
- 7 EU support has been relevant for Somalia and has brought positive results but development progress has been slow, piecemeal, and insufficient to trigger systemic change.
- 8 The EU's overall engagement was positive and became more strategic over time. Further strategic engagement and more targeted EU support are needed.

Figure 2. Somalia and the Horn of Africa



Main recommendations

- 

• **Clarify the role of the EU's international development cooperation** within the overall strategic EU approach to Somalia through updated EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions



• **Continue successful cooperation with international partners** including the WB, USA, UK and UN and **use opportunities from Team Europe Initiatives** to further strengthen exchanges with EU member states in Somalia
- 

• Formulate a **Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus guidance** and promote an updated UN-OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) **civil-military guidance for Somalia**



• **Enhance support for bottom-up development** and the **"localisation agenda"** by funding more local NGOs and CSOs and drawing a roadmap on support to local authorities
- 

• **Promote innovative combinations of EU instruments and modalities** drawing on successful examples in the education sector and learn from the Inclusive Local and Economic Development (ILED) programme. Continue providing budget support to leverage reforms



• Explore opportunities to **further promote cross-cutting issues** (conflict sensitivity, gender, youth, attention to vulnerability and human rights) via more explicit do-no-harm and transformative approaches
- 

• **Reinforce the EU's integrated approach** in Somalia, including by deepening cooperation with EU CSDP missions and operations and making better use of human resources therein



• **Keep peacebuilding and statebuilding goals central to cooperation efforts** and continue to act as a strategic partner which engages in political dialogue
- 

• **Improve the human resources situation**, including recruitment, staff numbers, working conditions and **assess the effects of a split EUD** between Nairobi and Mogadishu in 2025/2026



• **Work towards an improved EU support to resilience and the productive sectors** by better mainstreaming food and nutrition security and monitoring impact
- 

• **Foster the overall flexible cooperation approach** and **improve EU visibility** and outreach to the Somali public via more sophisticated and communication-savvy approaches



• Uphold efforts to **mobilise resources beyond international cooperation funding** by leveraging development finance and risk-sharing mechanisms (e.g., European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus) in close coordination with EU member states

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of ECDPM and Particip and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.