Agulhas
Applied Knowledge

European Centre for Development Policy Management

Institutional Evaluation, 2012 - 2016

Final report, 25 February 2016

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This report captures the findings of an institutional evaluation of the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM or 'the Centre'), conducted between October 2015 and February 2016 by a team of four Agulhas evaluators with expertise in ECDPM's key policy domains. It serves both learning and accountability purposes by looking back at the 2012-2016 strategic period in order to inform the next strategy, which is currently under development.

ECDPM is an independent foundation that aims to strengthen and support development-relevant policy processes within and outside of the EU institutions. At the time of the evaluation, the Centre is staffed by a multidisciplinary team of some 60 staff members (full time equivalents) and operates with a total annual budget of almost €7 million. Roughly two-thirds of the Centre's funding is made up of institutional funding, provided by ten European countries.

The Centre operates in a rapidly evolving European and global environment, manifested by increasing complexity and fragmentation in the wide field of international cooperation, with ever-more stakeholders and ever-shifting interests, dynamics and power patterns; new frameworks for global collective action; the emergence of new global actors and centres of power; persistent conflict and fragility, triggering intensified migration; a shift in the geographic distribution of inequality and extreme poverty; and renewed concerns of a global economic crisis.

In the midst of this complex, dynamic environment, the Centre's 2012-2016 strategy has been structured around five programmes, which aim to:

- Strengthen European external action for development.
- Promote effective approaches to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and state building.
- Promote economic transformation and governance for inclusive development.
- Support Africa's dynamics of change.
- Strengthen regional and local markets for agricultural development and food security.

Overall, the evaluation concludes that ECDPM has performed well throughout the review period. ECDPM is a well-known, highly visible, independent and non-partisan 'think and do tank' that contributes meaningfully to a range of development-relevant policy processes within and outside of the EU institutions. Its pertinence and relevance to informing – and sometimes shaping – the European agenda distinguishes it as one of the leading development-focused think tank in its field.

ECDPM has anticipated and effectively adapted to the new and emerging realities, while maintaining the Centre's established mission and principles. It has consolidated its unique niche as a facilitator, honest broker, convenor and supplier of expert thinking. Over and above providing the right analytical input to the right policy actors at the right time, ECDPM moves beyond the generation of knowledge that is the bread and butter of traditional think tanks, and actively brokers policy change – which is why it merits the title 'think and *do*' tank. It has also achieved considerable progress in 'thinking and working more politically', which has proven to be a key strategic choice.

The Centre's achievements are all the more impressive in light of its 'behind the curtain' *modus operandi*, which means much of its contribution to wider outcomes cannot be

publicly reported. Additionally, it is difficult to attribute and credit major outcome-level changes to ECDPM alone, since much depends on the political context and the interests and actions of the different actors. Nonetheless, the evaluation found ECDPM's contribution to development-relevant processes to have been significant. In particular:

- ECDPM contributes to well-informed and content-based policy dialogue, with effective participation of a wide range of European and African actors. When making these contributions, and where necessary, ECDPM has been willing to say things that other stakeholders cannot afford to say.
- ECDPM's analytical work helps policymakers and implementers better understand why it is often a struggle to implement policies, and how policy-related changes and transformations evolve. This work contributes to a narrowing of the gap between policy statements and practice.
- ECDPM has supported EU institutions to move towards more integrated and coherent policies, by addressing the quandaries of striking a balance between competing interests and the dilemmas these create in relation to the values that the EU institutions and its Member States strive to uphold.

Three key factors have undergirded ECDPM's success: a range of mutually beneficial partnerships; access to significant institutional funding and the independence this affords the Centre; and recent investments in strengthening ECDPM's organisational effectiveness.

In the process, ECDPM has grappled with a number of challenges. Among them: maintaining coherence, manifested by the lack of a connecting narrative that unites the various programmes, policy processes and experimental engagements not identified in the strategy; consistently capturing, documenting and reporting results; and including gender dimensions systematically in the Centre's programmatic work.

The evaluation highlights three risks the Centre needs to take into account in crafting its new strategy. First is the pressure it will continue to face, in light of the complex institutional environment, to widen its programmatic portfolio, leading to a potential fragmentation of effort. Second is the volatility in the funding environment, which poses a risk to the currently high levels of institutional support. A reduction of institutional funding would likely lessen ECDPM's future impact. Third is the potential downside risk posed to demand for ECDPM's products and services, by EU institutions looking increasingly inwards and African stakeholders soliciting partnerships outside of the EU.

The evaluation concludes that ECDPM can further consolidate its position as a leading 'think and do tank' by introducing a few innovations in its ways of working as well as its programming in the next strategic period. In this context, we recommend ECDPM to:

- Continue to adapt ECDPM's systems, policies and processes to the Centre's current size.
- Accelerate the depth and breadth of the Centre's ability to 'think and act politically' by integrating political analysis in both the planning and delivery of its programmes.
- Expand the Centre's strategic approach to addressing gender dimensions more systematically in its programmatic work.
- Deepen investment in partnerships as a clear means to delivering ECDPM's goals, rather than as an end in itself.
- Ensure that ECDPM's next mission statement, long term objectives, all-Centre and programmatic Theories of Change, results frameworks, and systems for planning, accountability and decision-making at all levels are fully aligned.

- Reduce the current overall number of work streams to ensure a connecting narrative and to have space to embrace a small number of new fields of focus.
- Seek to consolidate long term institutional funding from the EU and its Member States, while continuing to diversify income streams.
- Further strengthen external communication by paying more attention to stakeholder information needs, investing in better usage analytics, and improving planning and implementation of communication activities.
- Further improve knowledge management by giving increased priority to critical applications, making the Reporting System easier to use, and intensifying engagement towards a change in organizational culture.

Acronyms

ACD	ECDPM's African Change Dynamics programme
ACP	Group of 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific states
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGA	African Governance Architecture
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CONCORD	The European NGO confederation for relief and development
CoP21	The December 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris
CSO	Civil society organization
DEVCO	Directorate-General Development and Cooperation – Europeaid
DFID	UK's Department for International Development
DG	Directorate General
DIE	German Development Institute
EAC	East African Community
EC	European Commission
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
ERD	European Report on Development
ET	ECDPM's Economic Transformation programme
ETTG	European Think Tanks Group
EU	European Union
FOOD	ECDPM's food security programme
FRIDE	A European Think Tank for Global Action
g7+	An inter-governmental organization that provides a collective voice for countries affected by conflict and fragility
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMAKE	ECDPM's Information and Knowledge Management Exchange system
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IPSS	Institute for Peace and Security Studies
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
JAES	Joint Africa-Europe Strategy
KM	Knowledge Management
KMC/KM&C	Knowledge Management and Communication
LMRC	Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and Civic Education
LQS	ECDPM's Learning and Quality Support unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTR	Mid-term review
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development

NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PERIA	Political Economy Analyses of the African Union and regional economic communities in Africa
PERISA	Political Economy of Regional Integration in Southern Africa
PS4D	Private Sector for Development
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAA	ECDPM's Strengthening European External Action programme
SECURE	ECDPM's Security programme
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
TA	Technical Assistance
The Centre	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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Introduction

This report captures the findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations of an institutional evaluation of the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM or 'the Centre'). It serves both learning and accountability purposes: the report looks back at the 2012-2016 strategic period in order to inform the next strategy, which is currently under development. The report's primary audience is the ECDPM Board, which commissioned the evaluation. However, we are aware that the Board intends to share this report with key external stakeholders. As such, we have sought to make our findings, analysis, conclusions and recommendations accessible to both internal and external audiences. In doing so, and in keeping with an institutional evaluation of this nature, we have not included more operational observations and recommendations. These have been provided separately.

The evaluation was conducted by a team of four Agulhas consultants – Willem van Eekelen (team leader), Peter da Costa (deputy team leader), Francesca Cook and Paul Spray – between October 2015 and February 2016. The team was selected because of its combined policy, stakeholder and evaluation knowledge (see annex 5 for the team members' bios). The report's analysis is grounded in evidence gathered through a review of documentation (listed in annex 1), extensive interviews with an agreed sample of ECDPM staff and external stakeholders (listed in annex 2), as well as detailed feedback received on the basis of a first draft, from the Board, Management and Staff, and a Reference Group composed of two expert evaluators. The methodological notes (annex 3) provide a detailed overview of the methods, choices and limitations that shaped this evaluation.

The structure of this report follows the summary of ECDPM's 2012-2016 strategy (which is part of Chapter 1). This means that it covers, in turn:

- The changing environment in which ECDPM operates, in chapter 2.
- ECDPM's niche, in chapter 3.
- The outcomes that ECDPM has contributed to in the 2012-2015 period, in chapter 4.
- The themes that the strategy identified as its cross-centre priority themes, in chapter 5.
- ECDPM's partnerships and strategic alliances, in chapter 6.
- Issues related to ECDPM's organizational effectiveness, in chapter 7.

Together, these chapters seek to answer the five questions posed in the evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToRs, annex 4). These questions are as follows:

1. How pertinent were the strategic choices made by the Centre in its 2012-2016 Strategy considering the evolving EU / international agenda / environment for cooperation?
2. How effective was the implementation of the Strategy across policy processes, programmes and projects, particularly with regard to the main innovations introduced in 2012? [These innovations are the introduction of four cross-centre themes; the expansion of ECDPM's number of programmes; the embracing of a more political approach to brokerage; and the strengthening of a few key organisational processes.]
3. How effective was the Centre in acting as an honest broker/political facilitator of multi-actor policy processes?
4. How successful was the Centre in achieving the various types of outcomes it has defined?
5. How relevant and efficient were specific organisational choices related to primary processes such as our programme structure, our knowledge management and

communication systems as well as the mechanisms for quality support and progress review – for attaining the Centre's strategic objectives?

In each chapter, and in response to the evaluation questions, we provide some background, lay out our findings and analysis, and provide succinct conclusions and summary recommendations. Our overall conclusions can be found in Chapter 8, while Chapter 9 lists a number of strategic recommendations that flow from the issues identified in the report.

1. ECDPM in a nutshell

ECDPM is an independent foundation that receives funding from ten European governments in order to strengthen and support development-relevant policy processes within and outside of the EU institutions. ECDPM supplements its institutional funding with project and programme funding that, in the period under review, amounted to roughly a third of the Centre's total finances. In the course of the strategic period, overall funding has steadily increased – from €5.3 million in 2011 to €6.9 million in 2015. This growth trend is reflected in ECDPM's staffing levels, which moved from 47 to 60 full time equivalents in the same period.

ECDPM implements five programmes, which respectively aim to:

1. Strengthen European external action for development.
2. Promote effective approaches to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and state building.
3. Promote economic transformation and governance for inclusive development.
4. Support Africa's dynamics of change.
5. Strengthen regional and local markets for agricultural development and food security.

Four of these five programme focus areas recur in the form of 'cross-cutting outcome themes':

1. reconcile values and interests within the external action of the European Union;
2. promote economic governance and trade for inclusive and sustainable growth;
3. support societal dynamics of change within developing countries; and
4. address food security as a global public good.

The remainder of this section summarizes ECDPM's 2012-2016 strategy. The text in italics indicates the chapters in which we cover the various issues raised in this strategy. (Bold print is from the ECDPM's original strategy document, pages 4-5.)

ECDPM's 2012-2016 Strategy built on the Centre's **25 years of practical experience as an independent foundation**. It described its dual mission as being "to develop the capacity of actors from the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) and to improve (European) international cooperation for better development outcomes".

ECDPM's analysis of its operating environment found that the aid system was giving way to **new forms of international cooperation** that seek to address global development challenges in a more holistic way. It assessed the roadmap as unclear, and the outcomes for developing countries and vulnerable communities uncertain. *We reflect on the changing environment in more detail in Chapter 2.*

ECDPM concluded that **all major actors must adjust to the new context.** It noted that the European Union was set to build stronger, more differentiated and coherent external action, commensurate with its ambition as a global player. This was seen as quite a challenge in a context of economic and financial crisis, inward-looking tendencies and growing doubts about the relevance of development cooperation. The Centre also affirmed that Africa was on the move, with several countries experiencing record growth while lacking in the good governance needed to reduce inequalities and promote social cohesion. Furthermore, ECDPM observed that societies and citizens across the continent were claiming rights and demanding accountability. In this context, institutions at all levels were seeking to improve service delivery and be more responsive to societal demands. Africa was also increasingly asserting its own development agendas and diversifying its partnerships, while the ACP group had begun a fundamental reflection on its future role.

As the aid system mutated into more sophisticated forms of international cooperation, this strategy concluded that **new tools were needed**: well-informed dialogue processes, balanced and reciprocal partnerships, negotiations between actors with competing interests, institutional innovation and joint learning. The Centre considered that these were precisely the areas in which it had consistently been recognised as a leader.

The 2012-2016 strategy has been underpinned by ECDPM's long-established **mission and principles of engagement, which remain fundamentally relevant**. Throughout the period, the Centre retained **other unique assets**: its non-partisan approach; clear strategic focus on a limited set of policy areas, or 'policy processes', where it could make a difference; dual role as an independent knowledge broker and process facilitator; extensive relations with key actors in Europe and in the ACP; expertise in linking policy and practice; and investment in a strong results framework to enable measurement of contribution to outcomes even within this subtle and complex context. *We reflect on ECDPM's niche in Chapter 3 and on its contribution to the stated outcomes in Chapter 4.*

ECDPM committed itself to using these **strengths to contribute to the ongoing transformation of international cooperation and the evolving partnership between Europe and the ACP countries**. It set out to focus its work on a number of major ongoing transitions in the global development arena. It argued that effective management of these (for the benefit of developing countries) required new 'rules of the game' and changes in the policies, practices and institutions of international cooperation. Some of the key transitions related to managing scarcity (particularly of natural resources), ensuring more 'inclusive' and 'green' growth, safeguarding human security, and promoting global public goods and governance mechanisms. *In Chapter 4, we reflect on the outcomes that ECDPM has achieved over this strategy period.*

The document acknowledged that such an ambitious strategy was liable to open up a huge agenda. The Centre, with its relatively limited capacity and resources, planned to manage this risk by targeting its efforts on **four thematic priorities** that clearly expressed what ECDPM sought to achieve in helping address major challenges on the way to a better system of international cooperation[1]. *We reflect on the four thematic priorities in Chapter 5.*

The Centre also set out to **extend and deepen its partnerships and strategic alliances** in

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[1] These are: (i) reconciling values and interests within the external action of the European Union; (ii) promoting economic governance and trade for inclusive and sustainable growth; (iii) supporting societal dynamics of change within developing countries; and (iv) addressing food security as a global public good.

order to strengthen the hand of policy actors in the South, while building its own relevance, effectiveness and legitimacy. *We reflect on ECDPM's partnerships and strategic alliances in Chapter 6.*

The third pillar undergirding the 2012-2016 strategy was ECDPM's decision to **strengthen the organisation** to respond to the new agenda. The objective was to arrive at greater internal flexibility for better results, to increase dexterity and speed of response, extend outreach and think and act more politically. *We reflect on ECDPM's organizational effectiveness in Chapter 7.*

2. The evolving landscape of international cooperation

ECDPM's 2012-2016 strategy recognised that the landscape of international cooperation was changing. It described a few of the key changes and identified six underpinning 'transitions' that "require new responses at various policy levels." These transitions were defined as follows:

1. *Increasing scarcity, especially of raw materials and water*, leading to global competition for access to resources and a corresponding potential for conflict.
2. *The transition towards a 'green' economy*, with the related challenge of effective global management of climate change.
3. *Demands for more 'inclusive' growth for human development*, characterised by increasing pressure 'from below' to achieve a fairer distribution of resources, social justice, democracy and respect for human rights.
4. *The need to safeguard human security* by addressing conflict and improving the resilience of communities to (external) shocks, such as environmental degradation and rising food prices.
5. *The acknowledged global responsibility for global public goods*, alongside the question of how to address the broader development agenda via new forms of dialogue and cooperation between various policy domains.
6. *The restructuring of the global 'multi-level governance system'* and the associated shift of power to new actors and new frameworks of global governance.

Findings and analysis
Five years later, these transitions seem to have been well identified – with the possible exception of the first one, they are all underway and are likely to continue. In particular, the Paris Conference of Parties (CoP21) in December 2015 produced an ambitious climate-related agreement that the global community will now have to implement. The advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the fact that they apply to all countries and include a number of global public goods, underlines a trend towards collective global responsibility for shared development outcomes. The SDG for peace, justice, and strong institutions underscores our collective responsibility to safeguard human security and governance. The SDG commitment to 'leave no-one behind' creates a new priority for equity in the provision of public services and other development goods, with a focus on marginalisation and exclusion. Likewise, the shift in the global centre of power as related to financing of development is demonstrated in the emergence of the BRICS' New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the fact that China is already the largest investor in African infrastructure.

Three other important evolving dynamics that will impact on the context within which ECDPM operates deserve to be highlighted:

- **A shift in the geographic profile of extreme poverty.** Because of the continuing socio-economic development of much of Asia, and because of Africa's rapid population growth (the population will double in the next three decades), the vast majority of the remaining people living in extreme poverty will soon be African. An ever-increasing percentage of the world poorest people will live in Africa's urban slums, and most of them will be young.

- **Shrinking export markets for Africa's commodities, and substantial downside risks.** For the past decade, Africa's economy grew rapidly, driven by growing global demand for commodities. However this led to relatively little structural change, and few new jobs. Now, with the slowing global economy and risks of economic and political turbulence, intra-regional trade will be more important, and there will be a growing emphasis on putting in place the policies needed to generate growth from within Africa itself.

- **Increased conflict and fragility**, leading to unprecedented levels of humanitarian need. This is currently concentrated in countries in the MENA region and sub-Saharan Africa, but spreads well beyond national borders, and requires regional responses. These conflicts will add to the recent waves of **migration** within Africa and the Middle East, and into Europe.

These contextual shifts reflect the growing importance of Africa, in particular, in the European discourse on international cooperation, and are affecting the attitudes, actions and significance of ECDPM's main partners:

- **The African Union** continues to grow in importance, as interlocutor between African countries and their European and other international partners. The relationship between Europe and the AU is strongest in peace and security; also important are areas such as the governance, democracy and elections, and the emerging dialogue over migration.

- **Regional Economic Communities (RECs)** will be increasingly important partners as global growth slows – especially on trade, infrastructure and regional labour markets. The desire by AU member states to establish a Continental Free Trade Area is likely to find its most concrete expression at REC level, and ECDPM has already established important partnerships in this regard. RECs are also important in peace and security: the building of sub-regional brigades of the Africa Standby Force will continue to impact on the EU's current support to African peacekeeping operations, at a time when pressure on European aid is being transmitted to African troop contributing countries.

- **The EU** continues to try to adapt to the changing global environment and to improve how it governs itself. The financial crisis, the recent wave of migration, the Syrian war and other factors have all pointed to the need for a strong and united European Union but also revealed some of its structural weaknesses and challenges. One scenario is that the EU becomes a substantially weaker actor. The other scenario is that the EU does indeed manage to adapt. It is already looking at how and where it needs to do things differently.

A major discursive shift, currently engaging a wide range of policy actors, is the move

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from development cooperation to international cooperation – a transition already highlighted by the Lisbon Treaty and the formation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). With this shift comes a recognition of the need to look at the political dimensions of cooperation – and how drivers of positive change and resilience can be supported. The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy sees the development agenda having strong links to internal EU policies – and not just around trade and migration. Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is ever more important.

This is a trend also reflected in **EU member states**, in the amalgamation of development agencies with ministries of foreign affairs or trade, and in policy statements. For example, in November 2015 the UK simultaneously published a cross-government Aid Strategy and a Strategic Defence and Security Review, locating the aid programme within UK security objectives and national interest.

Within development cooperation ODA flows for 2014 were at an all-time high, but several of ECDPM's institutional partners reduced their ODA budgets significantly (i.e. Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands, with Denmark to follow in 2016). The nature of the ODA flows is changing as well. The field of development cooperation is increasingly about knowledge transfer and policy change rather than finance. Aid is increasingly used to stimulate other types of development finance, including from private investment and domestic tax revenues. Whereas the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on public services, the new emphasis is increasingly on support for the private sector as the engine of growth, of poverty reduction and of jobs for young people. What is missing is the required clarity as to how best to do this – especially in fragile states, where the need is greatest.

The position of non-state actors is also changing. With the rising importance given to the private sector, **transnational corporations** – increasingly including ones based in China – are ever more prominent, both as sources of investment and in influencing government policy and inter-governmental agreements. By contrast, there is decreasing space for **civil society organisations** in a number of African countries, as these countries' governments impose tighter controls.

Last but not least, there is a clear consensus that successful international cooperation requires strong attention to empowering women and girls and to promoting gender equality. The SDGs express this recognition in the 'gender equality goal' and in many of the other SDGs that include women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and as part of the solution. The EU conveys similar messages in its September 2015 *EU New Framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations, 2016-2020.*

When we asked external interviewees about the topics they thought that ECDPM should work on in the coming period, the wide-ranging nature of the replies illustrates the complexity of the current environment. We found that there was no obvious consensus on which were most important – with the possible exception of the issue of migration, which was mentioned far more than any other issue.

Conclusions
In this increasingly complex field of international cooperation, knowledge brokerage and the facilitation of multi-stakeholder policy processes are on equal footing with the provision of goods and services, and ECDPM's niche seems as strong as it has ever been (see next chapter).

We discuss the implications of this evolving and changed landscape on ECDPM's work during the period under review, as well as on its future strategy, in subsequent sections of the report.

3. Niche

The evaluation ToRs asked: "To what extent and how did ECDPM manage to find a relevant 'niche' and be considered as a credible actor in the various policy processes in which it engaged?"

We discussed this question with more than 100 internal and external stakeholders, and a relatively clear picture emerged. This chapter reports on our findings and analysis in relation to each of ECDPM's niche ingredients. These are the Centre's knowledge of European and African institutions, the non-partisan methods that ECDPM deploys to support policy processes; and the 'do' part of ECDPM's stated identity as a 'think and do tank'. We then present a few overall conclusions and, in the next chapter on 'outcomes', we assess the extent to which ECDPM's niche has helped contribute to various outcomes.

Findings and Analysis

Understanding of European institutions and policy processes

Consonant with its name – the 'European Centre for Development Policy Management' – ECDPM is first and foremost a *European* think and do tank. It is located in Europe, staffed largely by Europeans, and funded by European countries.

When we asked our respondents about ECDPM's niche, commonly expressed observations are related to the following (with representative quotes from external interviewees):

- **Understanding and insight.** ECDPM is a repository of expert knowledge about the EU institutions. "Nobody understands the institutions as well as ECDPM does", and this renders ECDPM "a kind of one-stop service on understanding EU policies and practice towards Africa." This service includes the provision of information that the European institutions, EU Member States and other stakeholders themselves would not be able to access. This role is self-assigned, but is also a *formal* part of ECDPM's service delivery offer to its institutional partners: "Specific services […] can include […] informal information on the views of other EU member states and of the various ACP/African and global players in relation to the areas of competence of ECDPM".[2]

- **Access, leverage and convening power.** At working and higher levels, the doors to the European institutions are open to ECDPM. As a consequence, ECDPM manages to "stay informed and firmly lodged in the 'insiders' track' of knowledge about what is going on in the EU." ECDPM does not keep its many contacts to itself but "helps [external stakeholders] by expanding our access into the machinery of institutional bodies in Brussels." This is useful for European member states, and a key reason why some African institutions partner with ECDPM.

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[2] ECDPM (September 2015) ECDPM Note in relation to policy support to Belgium (DGD).

- **Supplier of thinking.** ECDPM serves as "supplier of thinking" to the EU – often provided informally and invisibly. In addition to the many knowledge products that may have helped to shape EU and other policy outcomes, we have come across a range of EU documents that include unattributed but traceable ECDPM contributions that the Centre has provided informally and 'behind the curtain'. We found these contributions both in policy documents and in policy implementation guidance.

The primacy of ECDPM's Brussels-related expertise and contacts is widely appreciated and has been key in funding decisions of EU Member States as well as Switzerland.

We find that ECDPM is **_the_** leading development-focused think tank in the field of EU institutions. Its access to, contacts in, knowledge of and ability to contribute to the work of the European institutions form a core part of the Centre's niche. This part of ECDPM's niche remains highly relevant as, given that the EU institutions will remain a formidable force even in a changing geopolitical environment.

Understanding of ACP, and of African institutions and policy processes

In the period under review, ECDPM has generated landmark analytical outputs in relation to the ACP's current performance and dynamics, and stakeholders were in agreement that ECDPM's outputs were consistently both timely and authoritative. In most of its other work, ECDPM has gradually shifted away from its original focus on the ACP countries (i.e. the 79 member states) towards 'the countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific', and from there increasingly to Africa. In this strategy period and for the first time, ECDPM's focus on Africa included North Africa – as reflected in the exploratory work undertaken under the ACD programme in Tunisia. This is in line with the fact that all of the region's countries (with the exception of Morocco) are members of the African Union. ECDPM's interest in North African countries also reflects their geographic proximity to Europe, and the reality of the spill-over effects that political and socio-economic developments in these countries have on European policy contexts.

When asked about the usefulness of ECDPM, many African counterparts first and foremost highlighted ECDPM's knowledge of Europe and the European institutions, and about the various ways in which this has helped them in their understanding of European dynamics, in building European policy contacts, and in preparing for negotiations – an emblematic example being in relation to the EPAs. ECDPM's support has resulted in the Centre gaining growing trust from a range of African institutions, which has in turn helped ECDPM gain critical insights into African change dynamics. As a result, ECDPM is well-positioned to support Europe-Africa policy processes without coming across as partisan or '*too* European'.

In the course of implementing the current strategy, ECDPM has steadily expanded its support to policy processes *within* Africa. This is a relatively new field of work and many African and European stakeholders have noted that this potential niche will take time to mature. As one representative respondent stressed: "In Europe […] they are in the kitchen and have the right entry points. […] In Africa, for now [...] they are not at the same level." Nonetheless, and overall, we find that ECDPM's work within Africa is generally welcomed – and positive feedback has been particularly strong in relation to the CAADP evaluation, its food security outputs produced in West Africa, and its AGA and APSA work.

On the basis of the above, we find that ECDPM's work on EU-ACP relations continues to be part of its niche, and a field in which the Centre enjoys a unique position. However, we also

conclude that the Centre's move from the group of 79 ACP countries to the African continent is appropriate, and that the facilitation of EU-Africa policy processes remains an important and growing dimension of its unique niche. As we discussed in chapter 2, this geographical refocusing makes sense because the great majority of poor people in the world will be African, and because the ACP appears to be declining in significance as a relevant geopolitical grouping.

ECDPM's work on regional issues within Africa would further consolidate its standing as a credible partner in European-African policy processes. The current picture is one of a range of partnerships marked by differing levels of intensity and engagement. Some are output-specific, others are stimulated by demand, and yet others are of a more strategic, long-run nature, relying on personal connections and the building of trust[3]. In some cases the partnerships generate co-created knowledge, and in a few cases we have seen evidence of African partners gaining capacities in critical areas. Overall, the evidence suggests there is a degree of merit in ECDPM's opportunistic, case-by-case approach to partnerships. However, internal capacity limits amidst competing demands mean that ECDPM may run the risk of spreading itself too thin.

Set against this picture, and to be a stronger actor in EU-Africa processes, ECDPM would need to dedicate additional energy and resources to strengthening its African partnerships and engagement. In doing so, ECDPM may want to consider ways to bring its key relationship-building asset from Europe to Africa: the direct service delivery that paying European governments are entitled to, that is unanimously considered useful and trust-building, and that does not currently have a regional (let alone national) African equivalent.

Methods

ECDPM's methods are centred around the notion that it is an 'honest broker'. In a non-linear fashion, the Centre:

- Provides knowledge contributions, in the form of facts and insights in relation to policy positions and processes; and
- Brings stakeholders together and facilitates the encounters.

Throughout its policy support work, we find that ECDPM is increasingly applying analysis of power dynamics (referred to as 'thinking and acting politically').

In the next few pages, we cover the ensemble of ECDPM's knowledge contributions, brokerage, facilitation and its 'thinking and acting politically'.

Knowledge contributions

ECDPM expends significant effort to ensure that policy dialogues are well-informed. It often does this by mapping the available instruments, expertise and stakeholders in a given field of work, and by painstakingly analysing and comparing the positions of the various actors –

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[3] Much of the energy seems to be invested at continental level, notably at the AU but to a lesser extent at UNECA and with the NEPAD Agency. There is strategic engagement with sub-regional bodies, in particular COMESA. And there are a handful of strong and emerging partnerships with think tanks, such as the LMRC in Zambia, ISS in Pretoria, and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) in Addis Ababa. We were also made aware of intensive engagements with in-country civil society and other partners in Madagascar. This was not part of our sample.

rather than taking a position itself. In highly sensitive and politicised environments, we find that ECDPM is often one of very few organisations able to play this role.

When external stakeholders reflect on ECDPM's products and services, they almost always refer to ECDPM's important role as a generator of high-quality policy-relevant knowledge. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and aligned with one respondent's observation that ECDPM's knowledge contributions "range from good to excellent". The knowledge products most frequently mentioned as having been of exceptional quality tend to be related to issues on which ECDPM has worked for many years. This suggests that the value ECDPM contributes to its various fields of work deepens over time.

External feedback tends to focus on the relevance of the information and the balanced (ECDPM would call it 'non-partisan') nature of its analytical output. We cite the following viewpoint as representative of what we have found across the board: "ECDPM's material [is] balanced, less political and more objective than the material provided by NGOs, other think tanks or indeed the EC itself. It did not always take the middle-ground – rather it put forward rational arguments on this side and that side."

We find that ECDPM highly values and assiduously nurtures its non-partisan image. This does not mean the Centre is, as a rule, non-committal. Because it harnesses an evolving Political Economy Approach (discussed in more detail later in this chapter), ECDPM often challenges the conventional wisdom and is able to pronounce on issues in ways that stakeholders with a vested interest cannot afford to do. ECDPM's recent work on EU-ACP relations stand out as emblematic of the kind of work that external stakeholders appreciate because of the "value of 'calling it as it is'". Reflecting on these products, external respondents (almost all European, in this particular case) stated that "the […] paper is ground-breaking [and] really raising fundamental issues on the way forward"; "their reflections […] are absolutely crucial"; and even that ECDPM was "instrumental in changing attitudes in the Ministry [and] we hope that they can continue without shying away from asking difficult questions."

Precisely *because* ECDPM rarely takes a strong stance, the very occasional and deliberate use of bold statements may be heard more loudly than would be the case for an advocacy organisation. In cases where ECDPM has been 'non-partisan but not uncritical' – such as in its work on the EU-ACP partnership framework and its initial EPA-related work – ECDPM has attracted much praise (juxtaposed, inevitably, with a degree of criticism).

Overall and in most cases, we find the knowledge generated during the current strategic period to be of high quality, to be of value to its partners and other stakeholders, and to form an integral part of ECDPM's unique niche.

Brokerage and facilitation

Brokerage and facilitation cover a range of programmatic engagements, all ultimately designed "to help people make better use of evaluation evidence in their decisions."[4] Work in this aspect of the ECDPM niche takes the forms of making information and knowledge readily available and accessible; introducing stakeholders from different geographies or silos to each other; helping to get them around the table; and/or facilitating policy discussions.

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[4] From page 4 of a slide show from Jean Bossuyt, titled *ECDPM as a "honest broker"; what does it mean and how do we proceed?"* of October 2011.

We find that this is a successful combination, and this is illustrated by the past decade's continuous growh in the demand for ECDPM's non-partisan brokerage and facilitation role. This is probably partly because of increasingly complex geopolitics and the growing demand for more diverse multi-stakeholder policy forums; and partly because some EU member states' internal budget cuts have or will soon have rationalised their internal policy analytical capacity in relation to international cooperation.

This growing demand poses both opportunity and risk to ECDPM. On the one hand it allows ECDPM to continue along its positive growth trajectory as a think and do tank. On the other hand, it exposes ECDPM to the risk of being viewed as an organisation that governments can conveniently outsource *ad hoc* consultancy assignments to. We found evidence that in some instances this risk is already occasionally materialising. For example (and the quote is from a European stakeholder), we were told that: "[…] ECDPM helped a bit with writing papers […]. We faced time constraints, which is why we asked them. We could also have done the work ourselves, but it would have taken more time as they have all the knowledge about the EU institutions at their fingertips, while we would have had to collect information first."

This growing demand for *ad hoc* brokerage and facilitation services is not always easy for ECDPM to meet, as the role of broker and facilitator is a challenging one – not least because evidence is not generally the primary driver of policy processes. It can also be a politically controversial role, as brokerage and facilitation might provide momentum to policy outcomes that may not ultimately be development-enabling. To be able to address the challenges at hand while minimising the inherent risks, ECDPM requires technical competence, political savvy, and a certain non-partisan authority.

We found that that ECDPM has managed this challenging and risky balancing act with a high degree of success. In the words of one European stakeholder: "There are enough institutes that make good knowledge, and facilitation is not so difficult either. [ECDPM] is about the connection between the two. Get stakeholders together, in an insightful manner." Not all external stakeholders were as positive as this about all ECDPM's engagements, but many could name ECDPM staff members whom they considered to be very good facilitators – offering descriptions such as "oil in the wheels", "an active chair, willing to take the lead and move the conversation forward – not simply a facilitator concerned only with due process", "well-prepared, well-informed, professional facilitators."

Overall, we conclude that the increasing demand for non-partisan brokers and facilitators is both an opportunity (as it may allow ECDPM to continue it growth trend) and a risk (as ECDPM could be seen as an outsourcing facility). We note that this aspect of ECDPM's niche, while important and unique, remains fragile, as it rests on the expertise, reputation and credibility of relatively few and generally senior members of staff.

Thinking and acting politically

One of ECDPM's recent innovations has been to adopt a Political Economy Approach (PEA).[5] This is part of a wider all-Centre innovation aimed at fostering a stronger culture of thinking

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[5] See for example: ECDPM "A Five Lenses Framework for Analysing Political Economy" http://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/DP178-Framework-Analysing-Political-Economy-Regional-Integration-May-2015-ECDPM.pdf A brief description: "PEA investigates how political and economic processes interact in a given society, and support or impede the ability to solve challenges that require collective action. It takes particular account of the interest and incentives driving the behaviour of different groups and individuals more or less invested in the outcomes, the

and acting politically. The aim is to better equip ECDPM to deal with the political dimensions of change processes with a view to enhancing policy coherence and effectiveness and ECDPM's overall relevance and impact in an increasingly complex world. This evaluation's ToRs asked: "To what extent and how has ECDPM been able to implement its stated ambition to think and act more politically across the board? What worked well and why? What worked less well and why?"

The Centre has not yet fully come to terms with the various concepts and approaches related to thinking and acting politically. Not all staff members feel equipped or incentivised to think and act politically, and not everybody believes that ECDPM has or is able to gain access to the "deep granular knowledge of the local context and the local dynamics" required for thinking and acting truly politically. Especially some of ECDPM's more junior staff would benefit from clearer guidance and more easily accessible resources.

We find three elements of a multi-pronged approach to thinking and acting politically to be evident across the Centre's programmes.

First, thinking and acting politically has driven the Centre, (namely via the SEEA and SECURE programmes, and some of the cross-programme work), towards enacting the shift from 'development cooperation' towards 'international cooperation'. This is a transition that many insiders and outsiders emphasised as a crucial part of ECDPM's future.

Second, ECDPM has started an internal process of increasing awareness, capacity and resources to think and act more politically throughout all stages of a work stream. We foresee a number of major advantages. Initial context analyses whenever the Centre enters a new policy process will make it clearer whether the likely outcome of this policy process will actually contribute to development, and coherent international cooperation. These analyses will enable ECDPM to consider how to intervene most effectively in contexts where the constraint on effective action relates to factors beyond *evidence* alone. And sound political awareness will help to ensure that ECDPM's products and services arrive and are taken up by the right stakeholders at the right times, therefore potentially increasing impact.

Third, ECDPM has conducted significant PEAs, such as the Centre's perspectives on the future of the ACP-EU relations[6], its work on politics and power in international development[7], its PERISA study[8], its engagement in Senegal[9] and its forthcoming work on

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distribution of power and wealth between them, and how these relationships are created, sustained and transformed over time. These relationships, who wins and who loses, are crucial in explaining how wealth is created and distributed, how development change happens, how politics and governance works." (Sue Unsworth et al, *Using PEA to Improve EU Development Effectiveness – DEVCO Concept Paper* – 2011.) Note that, in the international cooperation sector at large, "the PEA agenda has steadily moved away from an aspiration to bring about profound change in the way donors think and act, towards a far more pragmatic focus on problem-solving and assisting with specific, ad hoc operational challenges." The type of PEA approach that ECDPM is deploying is on the pragmatic extreme of the wider paradigm. (Source of quote: Jonathan Fisher & Heather Marquette (2016) "'Empowered patient' or 'doctor knows best'? Political economy analysis and ownership", *Development in Practice*, 26:1, page 116.)

[6] ECDPM (October 2015) "The future of ACP-EU relations: A political economy analysis perspective", http://ecdpm.org/publications/future-acp-eu-relations-political-economy-analysis/

[7] ECDPM (January 2014) "Politics and Power in International Development – The potential role of Political Economy Analysis", http://ecdpm.org/publications/politics-power-international-development-potential-role-political-economy-analysis/

the *'Instrument for Stability'*. In terms of cross-Centre learning, ECDPM's game changer would appear to be its PERIA study[10], focused on regional integration in Africa. This study was the first time that many people from across the programmes "tried it out". According to one stakeholder, it was a protracted, time-intensive and painful process, and a "roller-coaster from the cave of despair to the mountain of joy [in the course of which] I lost a lot of sleep". However, most found it to also have constituted a valuable, Centre-wide learning process. The result, in the eyes of the funder, is gratifying: "Where we have arrived is absolute state of the art – in terms of providing understanding of these organisations you will find nothing remotely as good anywhere else".

In summary, we conclude that ECDPM has achieved considerable progress in terms of its strategic choice to 'think and work more politically.' External audiences appreciate ECDPM's PEA-related work. Nonetheless, ECDPM's engagement with PEA remains a work in progress, in the sense that it has not yet fully integrated PEA as a systematically applied approach and set of tools across all its programmes.

ECDPM's role as a 'do' tank

ECDPM presents itself as a 'think and do tank' and the 'do' component is often referred to in documents and interviews. There is a general recognition that the Centre is distinct from traditional think tanks in the sense that it moves beyond the generation of knowledge, and actively brokers policy change. It is also clear that at least some EU member states value ECDPM's investigations of how far EU policies are actually applied, and ECDPM's recommendations about what would make EU policies more implementable. In this sense, ECDPM is unquestionably more of a 'think and do tank' than other reference think tanks such as ODI or the German Development Institute. This is widely recognised and appreciated.

Parts of the Centre interpret the 'doing' more broadly than this, and see 'standing in the kitchen' of policy implementation as a key part of ECDPM's niche. In practice such front-line involvement seems rare, and our initial sample of policy processes did not include any examples of such work. This is in line with what ECDPM's own mid-term review and the 2015 internal assessment found:

> "For a long time, we have claimed to be **"a think and do tank"**, whose added value is to link policy and practice. ... Yet the MTR clearly reveals that we (increasingly) struggle to make this bridge. Evidence suggests most of our work across programmes is at 'policy level' (e.g. providing information/analysis; producing knowledge for policymakers and practitioners; participating in dialogues and conferences, etc.), much less at 'implementation level' (i.e. actively supporting reformers/practitioners to put the new knowledge or the new approaches into practice)." *(Mid-Term Review of the 2012-2016 ECDPM Strategy Draft, 7 October 2014, page 4, emphasis in original.)*

> "The various [internal assessment] reports show the challenge of concretising the 'do' part of our work. As evidenced in the outcome tables, most programmes are

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[8] ECDPM and SAIIA (March 2014) "The Political Economy of Regional Integration in Southern Africa (PERISA) project".

[9] Télécharger le document sur l'Analyse d'économie politique au Sénégal.

[10] ECDPM and IDL Group (July 2015-December 2015) "PERIA – Political economy analyses of the African Union and regional economic communities in Africa".

not directly working 'in the kitchen' to reduce the gap between policy and implementation. There may be good reasons for it (distance, capacity, funding) but it raises issues of consistency in our strategy as well as in our results framework." *(Internal Assessment Final Summary Report, page 13.)*

The analytical question is whether ECDPM should address this concern by (i) engaging more in this front line implementation, or instead by (ii) understanding its "do" work as active brokering of policy change, and assessing how far policy is implemented and implementable.

In this context, and from the limited investigation we were able to undertake of ECDPM's direct frontline work on improving the implementation of EU policy, we find that it tends to be time-consuming, high input, and difficult to replicate.

Overall, however, we find that the Centre is distinct from traditional think tanks in the sense that the Centre moves beyond the generation of knowledge, and actively seeks to broker policy change. In this sense, ECDPM is rightly referred to as a 'think and do tank'.

Chapter conclusions

As a non-partisan, knowledgeable and influential actor, ECDPM occupies a unique position in the ecosystem of European think tanks.

We know of no other organisation that has a comparable level of insight in the European institutions that concern themselves with external cooperation; that has ECDPM's level of access, leverage and convening power; and that facilitates policy development and implementation processes within the EU institutions, between the EU and its member states, and between European and African bodies.

ECDPM combines its insight and networks with a non-partisan approach it deploys in key spaces in which key European and African stakeholders assess policies and practices of international cooperation against intentions; in which these stakeholders are encouraged to recognize the challenges they face and the opportunities in front of them; and in which they reflect – on the basis of evidence and with depth – on the way forward.

In an increasingly complex international environment, this niche has enabled ECDPM to play a consistently positive role throughout the period under review.

4. Outcomes

It is a well-known methodological challenge to attribute outcomes to the actions of one actor in a complex situation. ECDPM has grappled with the attribution challenge – in the strategy document itself, the mid-term review as well as the internal assessments. The evaluation team has faced similar challenges. These are spelled out in the annex titled 'Methodological notes', which provides details on this evaluation's methodological challenges and the choices the team has made as a result.

Nevertheless, we believe we can make plausible judgments on ECDPM's contribution to the five outcomes against which its programmes are measured. In this chapter, we cover each of the envisioned outcomes, and then, because of its cardinal importance, the cross-cutting issue of gender equality. The five outcomes are: (1) more inclusive and better informed

policy dialogues; (2) more effective participation of public and private actors in key policy processes; (3) reduced implementation gap between policy and practice; (4) more integrated and coherent EU external action; and (5) strengthened partnerships between EU, member states and ACP countries.

Findings and analysis

Outcome 1: more inclusive and better informed policy dialogues

Full outcome statement: more inclusive and better-informed policy dialogues on global development challenges between actors from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Policy dialogues are central to ECDPM's work. They operate at different levels, from formal negotiations (such as the EPAs, or the East and Southern African Regional Organisations' meeting on establishing the new principles for the 11th EDF regional programming), to debate within the European Commission, policy discussions on CAADP, or consultations on the AGA framework.

The outcome here is that policy dialogues are more inclusive and better informed. On *inclusion*, we note a high degree of overlap between this outcome and Outcome 2: Outcome 1 relates to the *inclusiveness of the policy dialogues;* Outcome 2 relates to the extent to which ECDPM was able to *facilitate more effective participation* in them. It seems sensible to consider these together, under Outcome 2 below. So this section examines ECDPM's contribution to *better-informed* dialogue.

We found ECDPM to be diligent in preparing the information and analysis needed to inform policy dialogues. ECDPM often does this by providing a factual overview of existing knowledge on the subject matter at hand, undertaking mapping of stakeholders and, in doing so, comparing positions rather than taking positions itself. In the words of one ECDPM staffer:

> "We don't pretend to be smarter than others. We provide *options*, not recommendations: 'if your objective is *x*, consider this option. If your objective is *y*, consider this other option. The purpose is [to stimulate] discussion".

The Centre combines this with evidence-based dossiers that stakeholders perceive to be credible and objective. There are many examples of external respondents saying things such as:

> "The [...] paper is ground-breaking. [...] It is really raising fundamental issues on the way forward"; "Their reflections [...] are absolutely crucial;" and "ECDPM publications are extremely good. Very precise, very brief, contain a lot of information and are always updated. It's always a pleasure to read them. Sometimes we put them on our websites as a partner."

Outsiders recognise objectivity as a real ECDPM attribute – for example:

> "ECDPM were critical, but constructively critical. The public discussion of [an issue] was distorted, and ECDPM contributed to make it more objective."

When external stakeholders reflect on ECDPM's value, they also applaud ECDPM's willingness to challenge the conventional wisdom and to say things that others cannot

afford to say, even if this requires considerable courage. The recent paper on the ACP-EU, which informed the Addis Ababa meeting in December 2015, is cited as a very recent example.

While it was relatively straightforward to find evidence of ECDPM's output contributing to well-informed policy dialogues, a more complex methodological approach would need to be harnessed in order to come up with hard and fast evidence related to *uptake* and *use* of these outputs, something that is beyond the scope of this institutional evaluation.

Nonetheless, our aggregate findings indicate that ECDPM knowledge output does appear to be taken up and put to good use. Respondents have noted that "[ECDPM] directly influence our own positions" (or the position of others) and that "[ECDPM's] analysis [on three issues] was very helpful in helping us to understand how they could impact on us." Most remarks in this context were in reference to ECDPM's knowledge products, but occasionally they extended to the Centre's facilitation and brokerage role as well.

On Outcome 1, we conclude that ECDPM contributes to well-informed policy dialogue; and that this is partly due to a willingness, where necessary, to say things that other stakeholders cannot afford to say. Being non-partisan does not necessarily mean being non-controversial, and ECDPM navigates this sensitive role skilfully and effectively.

Outcome 2: more effective participation of public and private actors in key policy processes

Full outcome statement: more effective participation of public and private actors from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in key policy processes that affect their cooperation.

The indicators of Outcome 2 in the Extended Results Framework are quite broad, making it difficult to arrive at a clear sense of the parameters related to this outcome. Consequently, and as the internal assessments show, different programmes report on this outcome in different ways. The synthesis of these internal assessments does not attempt to impose a unified approach, but concludes that "This is […] an area where the Centre can show genuine outcomes across the board."[11]

We recognise that both the public and private spheres are made up of a multiplicity of actors, and will not attempt to conduct a forensic audit of ECDPM's effectiveness in brokering more effective participation in ACP-related dialogues. Nevertheless, we find that ECDPM does engage with a variety of actors, public as well as non-state. A number of external respondents have singled out ECDPM for its extensive network of contacts and its ability to introduce relevant parties to each other. We found ECDPM to have good relations with a number of think tanks in Europe as well as Africa, as well as long-standing relations with policy-focused INGOs such as CONCORD and Oxfam (not least in Addis Ababa). The ACD programme maintains an impressive array of partnerships in Africa, including at the AU Commission, in the NEPAD Agency, at the Pan-African Parliament, with EU Delegations and Embassies, and think tanks.

This range of partners has permitted ECDPM to support their inclusion and their effective participation in policy processes. To take four disparate examples, ECDPM consulted with farmers' organisations in the context of CAADP, and has taken on board their views in its

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[11] Internal Assessment Synthesis, page 7.

advice to COMESA and NEPAD; facilitated the first Brussels CSO discussion on the JAES; brought together the key g7+ and AU actors in an ACCORD-organised conference on peacebuilding; and persuaded the g7+ to include CSOs in a consultation in Guinea Bissau. A recent example of multi-stakeholder engagement, increasingly critical to delivery of ECDPM's work, is the event ECDPM co-convened with the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa on 5 December 2015, to discuss the future of ACP-EU relations.

One group that has proved elusive has been the private sector, one of the many groups classified as non-state actors.[12] We note that the private sector features very prominently in ECDPM's aims and plans for the strategic period under review. In addition to this outcome, it features in three of the four all-Centre themes, and takes centre stage in the policy process on PS4D. This reflects the fact that the private sector is considered an increasingly pivotal actor in development and international cooperation – as evidenced by the role assigned to it in the roll-out of the SDGs and the implementation of the Paris climate change agreement.

Nevertheless, ECDPM's reporting reveals a number of challenges encountered in working with the private sector, and external respondents rarely mentioned the private sector when discussing ECDPM's strengths. The Economic Transformation programme notes:

> "We engaged with African private sector stakeholders, and on strategies to foster a better public-private dialogue in Africa. However, our continuous effort to identify clear entry points for a well articulated policy process has not been rewarded with the expected success, leading us to engage in more ad hoc processes."

Likewise, some imaginative efforts to engage with mining companies on the extractive agenda have not as yet led to enduring partnerships. This comes as no surprise – other development actors, including think tanks, are grappling with the same challenge. ECDPM has entered this arena relatively recently, and it will take time and continued experimentation for it to develop strong and enduring partnerships with private sector actors.

As noted in Chapter 2, civil society faces increasing challenges, as the policy space in which it has traditionally operated in different contexts is narrowing. Even in Brussels, INGOs are concerned that critical voices are not heard, and one such respondent feared that "ECDPM mirrors […] a trend that we observe more broadly, [which is one] of shrinking space for CSOs… [with] limited invitations [and] closed circles." At least since 1994, ECDPM has argued that Europe should integrate civil society as a key actor. In the current period, ECDPM has actively engaged with EU Delegations to increase and improve their engagement with civil society in country. We found that INGOs in Brussels are keen to have a strategic engagement with ECDPM.

On Outcome 2, we conclude that ECDPM has worked hard to support the effective participation of a wide range of actors, both in Europe and in Africa. In a good number of policy processes, it has done so successfully. For different reasons, private sector and civil society participation remains uneven or is circumscribed, although ECDPM has continued to seek ways of facilitating and enabling their engagement.

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[12] It should be noted that the Private Sector for Development (PS4D) policy process was not part of the agreed sample for this evaluation.

Outcome 3: reduced implementation gap between policy and practice

Full outcome statement: reduction of the 'implementation gap' between policy and practice in key areas that affect the EU's cooperation with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in addressing global development challenges.

The implementation gap question is widely acknowledged to be of importance to ECDPM's remit. However, when asked about ECDPM's roles in reducing the implementation gap between policy and practice, respondents answer in two distinct ways:

- Some respondents focus on "being in the kitchen", meaning working directly with officials on the implementation of policy. This is partly because of the utility of the direct work, but also because of the value this work creates as pilot initiatives that can then be replicated, and because of the value of on-the-ground learning for ECDPM itself.

- Others focus on the Centre's analytical contribution and brokerage in order that policies are actually introduced, and are *implementable.* Where other think tanks might simply propose a policy, ECDPM puts in time to persuade policymakers to take it seriously, and to adapt it so that it fits into their practice, or a realistically revised practice.

Possibly as a consequence of sample bias, the work we have seen is by and large in this second group.[13] There is an example of brokerage in the section below on Outcome 5: ECDPM's input into the EPA negotiations could be seen as a case of reducing the implementation gap, by proposing elements that might indeed be accepted by both sides and hence actually reaching an agreement. In the assessment below, we limit ourselves to the <u>analytical</u> part of ECDPM's work, as it is the only aspect that we have been able to triangulate satisfactorily.

From the examples we have seen, we have identified three types of analytical work that relate to the implementation gap. In each of these three types, ECDPM has managed to remain a non-partisan stakeholder, and to have contributed to significant outcomes.

1. Forward-looking analyses. ECDPM may present its thinking at a *very* early stage, and ECDPM's paper and podcast titled *Universality and Differentiation* is a good example. In the words of an external respondent:

> "The idea is that the SDGs apply to all countries, but this does not mean that every country can implement them all. In a very early stage, ECDPM already presented a paper in which they outlined what this means, in practical terms." Because ECDPM's paper and podcast were analytical front-runners in a time when most people were still discussing the SDGs themselves, the outcome was that "this has shaped people's thinking about this topic [of implementation]."

On other occasions, ECDPM translates its thinking, upon request, into policy *guidance* (i.e. 'you now have a policy, and this is what it *means* in practical terms'). ECDPM does this well. As one external respondent noted:

> "They are actually much better than [the] EU [in] developing policy guidelines. Because of their good contacts and the quality of research they have, and the fact

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[13] There are some relevant thoughts about the first group in the section on "do" in the Niche chapter.

they really know what the institution needs, they are great writers of policy guidelines."

2. Political economy analysis of prevailing realities. The various PEA pilots, and the work on aid for trade and regional integration, are good examples of this. What, in reality, are the driving forces in, say, regional integration and the trade corridors? And what are the policy implications of these observations? We agree with the Internal Assessment that this work may serve as "an entry point for further policy dialogue that starts from a more realistic starting point than is often currently the case," – which therefore contributes to Outcome 3. Another example is ECDPM's work in support of the African Mining Vision, which contributed to UNECA's ability to interest a sub-set of African countries in developing national mining policies along those lines.

3. Backward-looking analyses (with forward-looking implications). ECDPM assessed what happened under the 'Agenda for Change' (which is the basis for the EU's development policy), for example. What happened and what lessons can be extracted and usefully applied to the EU's next international development/cooperation strategy? This type of work is likely to reduce the implementation gap of future policy if its findings are taken seriously, and we found policymakers who were indeed pleased with ECDPM's input, and found it provided a crucial analytical overview that would otherwise have been missing. As with the other two methods, we adjudge ECDPM to have indeed contributed to narrowing the implementation gap.

On Outcome 3, we conclude that ECDPM's analytical work has contributed to narrowing the gap between policy statements and practice. ECDPM's ability to get its knowledge products to the right policy makers at the right time is crucial. This issue is taken up further in the section on external communication.

Outcome 4: more integrated and coherent EU external action

Full outcome statement: more integrated and coherent EU external action that reconciles its values and interests and takes account of the impact of its internal and external policies on developing countries in order to level the 'playing field' for sustainable global development.

ECDPM's potential effectiveness depends on the competencies, the political agendas and the power of its key counterparts, and is compromised by internal weaknesses of the institutions that ECDPM focuses on. Time and energy are sometimes lost when people move, when political agendas change, when other concerns take precedence, when environments become overly politicized, and for a range of other reasons. The coherence of EU's external action is a case in point, as the EU institutions face fundamental system challenges in this domain. An outsider alone cannot even begin to resolve these challenges. What ECDPM can do, and does do, is two things:

First, ECDPM supports the EU's own efforts to strengthen its external coherence, through its European External Action Service (EEAS). This has had its effects: in the process of setting up the Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation function of the EEAS, for example, an external interviewee highlighted "key stages and key steps of this build up that ECDPM was instrumental in", adding that "ECDPM has had a large impact on our setup today." Similarly, ECDPM's thematic evaluation of European Commission funding of Conflict Prevention and Peace Building presented findings and recommendations that continue to influence current policy initiatives today. The 2014 ETTG Memorandum entitled 'Our Collective Interest', to which ECDPM was a major contributor, attracted some 300 EU policy makers and staff to

two presentations in Brussels – not least because it was timed ahead of the new College arriving in office.

Stakeholders outside of the EU institutions recognise that "ECDPM has […] important influence on the EU [and] on what the future will be in EU development policy", and attribute this, in part to "ECDPM often holding a unique longer-term institutional memory of what has worked and what has not in the past."

Second, ECDPM works on Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) as an all-Centre focus, with the SEEA programme in the lead. The aim is to help stakeholders to address how best to reconcile differences between value-sets and interests or preoccupations within and amongst key players. Interviewees from the EU, Member States and OECD suggested that the Centre's work has helped to advance Europe's 'beyond aid' agenda, which itself is widely seen as key to achieving development gains.

The Centre's PCD work contributed to framing the discussions by providing robust information and analysis; guides; training; and facilitation of dialogue (between civil society and governments, but also within governments). The EU institutions refer to ECDPM's PCD work in their official Policy Coherence Reports and the European Parliament report on Policy Coherence for Development from 2012 also included several paragraphs adapted from ECDPM's work. OECD Peer Reviews, and the OECD's overview publications on PCD have used ECDPM material as a strong point of reference, as have national parliaments (e.g. the UK Parliament report on beyond aid). Examples that ECDPM have highlighted include:[14]

- The facilitation of dialogues on food security, between civil society and governments.
- Advice on Denmark's Action Plan.
- Operational guidance to Switzerland.
- Country impact studies for Finland (on food security).
- Training in relation to PCD commitments for Belgium.
- Developed analysis indicators for reflection in Portugal.
- Facilitated dialogue in Ireland, civil society and Ministerial meeting.
- Contributions to an inter-ministerial seminar in Italy.
- The publication of 'Bringing Policy Coherence for Development into the Post-2015 Agenda – Challenges and Prospects'
- Engagement with OECD, the World Bank, Switzerland and UNDP on migration and PCD.
- Work on impact indicators and country studies requested by EU, OECD and Member States.
- The development of a Wikipedia page on Policy Coherence for Development[15].

It is hard to establish a causal chain, and much of the work is 'behind the screen.' However, external respondents often testified that in their view ECDPM has influenced certain EU policies, and attributed this influence to qualities such as these:

> "ECDPM has institutional memory, good connections, strong understanding of the EU and its processes, and strong connections on the ground. It can produce knowledge, broker it, and facilitate decision-making processes in a way that is very helpful to advancing the development perspective within the EU institutions and processes."

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[14] Examples are from ECDPM's SEEA Internal Assessment PCD April 2015 and interviews.
[15] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_Coherence_for_Development

These connections exist across a range of EU institutions and this means that, on an issue such as trade, ECDPM is able to engage with "DG Trade and DG DEVCO, but also the EEAS and even the cabinet of the President of the Commission, as well as EU Member states."[16]

The 'policy coherence' work of one of the policy processes of the FOOD programme illustrates how the causal chain could work, with outcomes in Africa reinforcing ECDPM's effectiveness in influencing the EU. A few external interviews confirmed that the following account from the programme's internal assessment (paraphrased and summarized for the sake of brevity) is broadly in line with the memories of external stakeholders.

Case: stronger linkages between trade and agriculture policies create synergies for food security

The situation
Trade, agriculture and food security discussions are largely separate discussions.

ECDPM's contributions
African and European stakeholders used ECDPM's analyses and facilitation to help understand what synergies for food security can be created through better coordination between trade and agriculture processes, policies and programmes.

Outcomes in Africa
- CAADP now has a trade-related goal/commitment in the AU Heads of States Malabo Declaration. An external respondent confirmed that "it is possible to show that ECDPM has made suggestions that have found their way into the Malabo Declaration."
- With support from ECDPM, a few Regional Economic Communities have articulated synergies between trade, agriculture and food security within their regional CAADP Plans.

Contribution to Outcome 4
ECDPM's 'PCD for food security' has been noticed in Brussels. Among other things, this may lead to more assessments of the impact of policies such as the EU Common Agricultural Policy on food security in individual developing countries. ECDPM has piloted the methods (developed jointly with OECD) in Tanzania and Burkina Faso.

On Outcome 4, we conclude that ECDPM is well respected in Brussels, and has influenced EU policies and procedures towards more integrated and coherent policies.

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[16] Quoted from the Economic Transformation & Trade Internal Assessment 2012-2015, page 20 (and duly triangulated in external interviews).

Outcome 5: strengthened partnerships between EU, member states and ACP countries

Full outcome statement: strengthened partnerships between the EU, its member states and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific for equitable and sustainable governance of global development challenges.

Significantly, and as covered under the other outcomes above, we find ample evidence that ECDPM:

- Helps each of these three groups of stakeholders to understand each other.
- Introduces stakeholders to each other.
- Facilitates the conversations.

The evidence also shows that ECDPM manages to do so while maintaining its credibility as a non-partisan and independent broker.

These three types of outputs do not always lead to 'strengthened partnerships' as there is not always enough traction. In the field of extractives, for example, ECDPM has delivered a number of outputs that highlighted the divergence between mineral-related agendas of Africa (which is essentially about using minerals for *economic transformation)* and Europe (which is essentially about ensuring continued *access* to minerals). These outputs were much appreciated by African stakeholders in particular; they have also been referenced in development publications, and presented in Europe. For example, an ECDPM staff member delivered a presentation at the National Round Table on Gold at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A November 2015 search identified more than 50 references to ECDPM publications about extractives. However, it would be a stretch to conclude from these clear indicators of a strong ECDPM footprint that the Centre has yet been able to convince Europe to re-align its agenda on extractives to be more in line with African aspirations, and so to take forward a strengthened partnership on the issue.

In some cases, it is easy to attribute outcomes to ECDPM's intervention: a positive ECDPM assessment of an African initiative, for example, made it easier for a European donor to continue the funding partnership. In other cases, the causal chain is much more complex. The EPAs are an example of the latter. We present the case here because it illustrates both ECDPM's usefulness and the difficulty of separating ECDPM's contribution from the roles of other stakeholders.

Case: Economic Partnership Agreements

The situation
EPA negotiations had been static for years. Then, in 2013-14, the EU forced an endgame onto the negotiations: the EPAs needed to be signed or ACP members would lose their preferential trade access.

ECDPM's contributions
In the years when negotiations were static, ECDPM provided information and analysis to both the EU and ACP members. Both sides appreciated this, but it did not progress the EPA agenda. Then, when the EU forced an end game in 2013-14, both parties valued ECDPM's three contributions:

1. ECDPM continued to provide a flow of information about the interests of each side to the other side. This helped to create clarity.

2. ECDPM looked for flexibility in the negotiations, and identified relatively minor compromises that would reduce resistance to the EPAs. This helped to reduce mutual hostility.
3. ECDPM supported a group of EU member states to persuade the EU to accept a few key exemptions to the EPAs, and to avoid marginalization of Africa's regional trade bodies. This helped to create traction.

Outcomes

EPAs have been agreed with the key African regional groupings – EAC, ECOWAS and SADC – though not with others. ECDPM was not the only external (i.e. non-ACP and non-EU) stakeholder involved in the EPA negotiations, and in contributing to the compromise reached. However, most European and African parties felt that ECDPM made a significant contribution to three outcomes:

1. The EPAs are less inimical to Africa's development than they might have been without ECDPM's identification of scope for flexibility on both sides (by, e.g., excluding services and by allowing for a percentage of goods that is permitted to be excluded from tariff reductions).
2. The EPAs have not split up EAC, ECOWAS and SADC. Note the link with Outcome 4: this is an example where one key EU interest – an enthusiasm for healthy regional structures – may have contributed to the outcome of an altogether different policy area (trade relations).
3. Africa-EU relations are no longer poisoned by the EPA negotiations – which is why this case study is in the Outcome 5 on 'strengthened partnerships'.

ECDPM's contribution appears to have been significant, but there remains a question about the impact of these contributions to wider *development outcomes*. An African stakeholder felt that "ECDPM should have built up the ACP to strengthen their position […]. Power relations were very important, and the gap in power was wide. The EC did not need support! This was a negotiation [and] the issue was not understanding, but power. We needed a policy dialogue – whereas the EC got away with repeating the official version, ignoring the contradictions between free trade and development." A European non-governmental stakeholder agreed. This case study exposes the difficulty of ECDPM acting as an honest broker, on issues with high ideological content and high stakes on both sides.

On Outcome 5, we conclude that examples of partnerships strengthened through ECDPM action are numerous and identifiable. However, the outcome itself is shaped by many factors that are largely out of ECDPM's direct control. Much depends on the political dynamics at play and the interests and actions of the different parties concerned.

Including gender equality and women's empowerment

There was no specific gender outcome identified in the 2012-16 Strategy, but we deal with it here because of its importance. Stark gender disparities persist in political, economic and health realms – worldwide – and in particular in low-income, fragile, and conflict torn countries.[17] There is overwhelming recognition that successful international cooperation will require stronger attention to empowering women and girls and to promoting gender equality than has been the case to date. Today, there is intensifying global demand for

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[17] http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality#sthash.1gBhrepK.dpuf

gender analysis in applied research, policies and programming. This demand is expressed in the SDG gender equality goal, in many SDG targets that specifically include women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and as part of the solution[18]; in the EU *New Framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations, 2016-2020*[19]; and in the UK's commitment to "putting girls and women at the heart of our development assistance" as set out in the DFID Business Plan[20].

We find, during the strategy period, that ECDPM has included gender dimensions in some significant outputs. Positive examples to build on include a discussion paper on the lack of gender dimensions in the 11th EDF programming, and a 2014 GREAT Insights article on "Inclusive Economic Growth Through Women's Entrepreneurship Promotion".[21] The SEEA programme, in particular, has included gender dimensions in important areas of work – such as its analysis of the Agenda for Change and its contributions to the EEAS guidance on women's participation and gender in mediation, and its moderation of the first discussion on the implementation New Gender Action Plan with EEAS, Swedish MFA, and civil society. Notwithstanding these positive examples, we find that there is room for improvement in this important area.

The team has understood that the current deliberations on the Centre's future strategy already include proposals for a robust focus and monitoring mechanisms aimed at gender equality, women's empowerment, and the inclusion of gender dimensions in the Centre's political economy or 'context analysis' activities.

On Gender, we conclude that ECDPM has some distance to go to embrace the global trend to accelerate attention and resources in this crucial area. All outcomes would be strengthened by ECDPM stepping up its ability to include gender dimensions and the empowerment of women and girls more systematically in its programmatic work. We recommend that ECDPM continues to recognise the strategic significance of gender analysis, and bolsters its ability to include gender dimensions more systematically in its programmatic work.

Chapter conclusions

Our overall conclusion on outcomes is that ECDPM's knowledge output, facilitation and brokerage, has in aggregate significantly contributed to the achievement of the outcomes identified in its 2012-2016 Strategy, even though many elements of these outcomes depend on the political situation and the interests and actions of the different parties.

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[18] http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality#sthash.1gBhrepK.dpuf

[19] http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/joint-staff-working-document-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-transforming-lives-girls-and_en

[20] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67582/strategic-vision-girls-women.pdf The Business plan focuses programmes for gender in: governance and legal frameworks, economic assets; and continued mainstreaming of gender analysis across all areas DFID addresses, including climate change, governance, peace, security, trade and economics.

[21] Full references: Herrero, A., Knoll, A., Gregersen, C. and Kokolo, W., "Implementing the Agenda for Change An independent analysis of the 11th EDF programming", *ECDPM Discussion Paper No. 180*, September 2015; and Vossenberg, S., *Inclusive Economic Growth Through Women's Entrepreneurship Promotion: What Works and What Doesn't?*, GREAT Insights Magazine, 12 June 2014.

We also conclude that ECDPM needs to find better, more effective and less burdensome ways to track progress at the programmatic and all-Centre level. Progress tracking is currently done in a multiplicity of ways[22], and requires streamlining and systematisation. An absence of systematic progress tracking may limit the Centre's outcome achievements, and certainly limits the visibility of these achievements. As we indicate in the knowledge management section, ECDPM is already addressing this challenge.

5. ECDPM's four cross-cutting themes

The evaluation ToRs explain that "the strategy's four themes represent 'meta-goals' to guide our action, i.e. areas in which ECDPM can add value as an independent broker and facilitator at the interface between policy and practice."

The four themes are closely linked to four of the five programme aims:

4 All-Centre thematic priorities	5 Programme aims
Reconciling values and interests in EU external action	Strengthen European external action for development
	Deepening overall responses to conflict, security and resilience
Supporting societal dynamics of change in developing countries	Support Africa's dynamics of change
Promoting economic governance and trade for inclusive growth	Promote economic transformation and governance for inclusive development
Addressing food security as global public good	Strengthen regional and local markets for agricultural development and food security

At the time the current strategy was developed, the development cooperation architecture was in accelerated evolution. Discussions focused on applying "comprehensive approaches" to external actions of donor governments, and debating the merits of PCD. This underlined the need for think tanks and other hubs of expertise to take solid steps towards "comprehensive " or "joined-up" approaches to what they themselves produced to ensure robust and relevant research and analysis. The four cross-cutting themes were partly a response to this. The evaluation team looked at the extent to which the themes were relevant to the context period of the strategy, and the extent to which they were incorporated into the programmes and all-Centre activities.

Findings and analysis

We found the following:

- The four themes themselves, for the period of the strategy, were all pertinent and relevant for ECDPM stakeholders – because they addressed either core aspects of ECDPM's niche – and/or issues of global concern relevant to EU and ACP.

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[22] These include via the IMAKE Reporting System, demanding individual reports to specific donors, a comprehensive Annual Report, a full-scale Mid-Term Review, and an Internal Assessment.

- The close resemblance between the programmes and the themes seems to have created, in retrospect, a strong overall sense of "what ECDPM is trying to do"; its "thematic lenses" and the cross-cutting approach it is trying to apply. At the same time the programme-theme overlaps are also confusing.
- There are examples of all programmes integrating one or more of the four themes.
- This was most successful with the theme of reconciling values and interests in EU external action, because all programmes were integrally concerned with EU actors, as well as for SECURE – not attached to a theme but relevant to most.
- At the same time, staff tend to think more in terms of "programmes" as a deciding central driver of what they "do". Many staff members do not appear to use the themes to frame their work, and have few incentives and/or time to do so (and that last element is a source of considerable frustration). In this context, theme convenors have had a very difficult task.
- The themes are not a part of the appraisal process, and the five "development outcomes," against which each programme does report, already overlap considerably with the themes. It is difficult to distinguish, therefore, to what degree the four themes contributed to an increased coherence within ECDPM that would not have happened anyway.
- There are cross cutting methodologies, for example "applying a more political approach" which at times closely resemble a cross cutting theme in practical terms.

Chapter conclusions

We conclude that having a system of Centre-wide themes is in line with global attempts to increase policy coherence and encourage comprehensive approaches or "joined up policy making". The Centre's cross-cutting themes provided, generally speaking, a frame that helped to limit what would otherwise have been very broad fields of work for each programme. The strong alliance between the programmes and themes was at times helpful – serving as strong identifiers – but also at times confusing. It is worth considering whether this could be simplified structurally.

The choice of themes was pertinent to the global context of the current strategy. At the same time, given global and structural evolutions (discussed elsewhere), the Centre would do well to consider to what extent each of the themes and programmes will continue to be relevant for ECDPM, and whether other 'cross-cutting' themes should be introduced. In addition, it is important that the cross-organisational themes that are decided upon are clearly anchored in any Theory of Change the Centre might decide upon.

We conclude that the thematic approach has been relevant, but that the Centre's system-framework for supporting an "all Centre thematic" approach is now ready to be revisited and its purpose sharpened. There is a need to increase robustness, provide stronger incentives and deeper awareness of the time required – so that work produced integrates the themes from the outset.

In the chapter on recommendations we suggest that, if ECDPM chooses to maintain a system of cross-cutting themes, then the next strategy's themes are best incorporated into the Centre's various planning and accountability systems. In addition, and not included in the recommendations chapter, we recommend that ECDPM:
- Introduce a system for integrating the consideration of cross cutting themes at the initial stages of a process or product plan.

- Incorporate the themes into the various systems that allow for decentralised decision-making (e.g. the go/no-go system for new initiatives and the annual sheet of focus areas that ECDPM submits to its institutional partners).
- Introduce the application of cross cutting themes into ECDPM's monitoring and accountability systems.
- Recognise, as governments and policy makers have done, that coherent and comprehensive products (i.e. that incorporate the cross cutting themes) are time consuming and require a great deal of cross-sector knowledge exchange.
- Require each programme to consider what it can contribute to the focus of the other programmes – rather than having a separate theme that is very similar to the programme.
- Consider whether there are new cross-cutting themes, not related to a particular programme, that should be introduced – for example gender.

6. Partnerships and strategic alliances

ECDPM's 2014 Annual Report lists some 50 'key partners'. These partnerships are of different kinds and vary in depth. To form our overall judgment, we looked at the three aims that underpinned ECDPM's 'strategic choice' to "extend and deepen our partnerships and strategic alliances." We did this largely on the basis of interviews with a sample of partners that had a bias towards the more active partnerships.

Findings and analysis
Aim 1: partnerships and alliances strengthen the hand of policy actors in the South. At least in Africa, this commonly happened. Upon the initiative of both sides, ECDPM fills critical knowledge gaps, provides useful contacts and increases the visibility of African partners. Many of the African stakeholders we talked with explained how ECDPM's support and information helped them in their understanding of and visibility *vis-à-vis* the European institutions, and how this strengthened their knowledge base and preparedness for negotiations.

The following view expressed by one African respondent is significant and worth quoting in full:

> "[ECDPM] did not take credit for the studies, they gave credit to the organisations that had generated the research. They identify the information, bring it together and work closely with the owners of the information. They were very careful to give credit. If they have a hidden agenda I don't see it."

Aim 2: partnerships and alliances support institutional development of such actors. This links with ECDPM's mission "to develop the capacity of actors from the countries of […] ACP"– recognising that institutions do not necessarily need capacity building support, and indeed that the benefit is two-way. Our findings here depend on the institutional dynamics and needs of the partners involved.

We find that ECDPM support has helped newer institutions to build their credibility and their ability to make a distinct contribution to a partnership with ECDPM. We found this to be true particularly for the Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and Civic Education (LMRC) and the g7+. Sometimes this foundational support has been provided through the provision by ECDPM of specific knowledge-related services.

We also found that ECPM is aware that its support, if not calibrated carefully, could run the risk of substituting capacity, as opposed to providing catalytic support to a fledgling partner in its formative stages.

We have seen little evidence that ECDPM has been able to undertake the more structural and systemic task of building and sustaining the overall institutional capacity of such partners in the Global South over time. This is an unsurprising finding, and it is one that ECDPM's internal assessments have come to as well. The general experience of development agencies is that Technical Assistance (TA) programmes very rarely succeed if they are implemented by organisations that are physically present only very occasionally, and that have many other fields of focus.

Aim 3: partnerships and alliances increase the relevance, effectiveness and legitimacy of ECDPM's work. This holds true, particularly the latter two aspects, for ECDPM's partnerships with both African and European stakeholders. Specifically:

Effectiveness: We have found that partnerships serve as entry points for ECDPM to gain political access. This has been the case with regional arrangements such as CAADP, COMESA and the g7+, as well as partnerships with institutions such as LMRC. Partnerships provide ECDPM with relevant expertise – the ETTG being a good example. They also enable insights that the Centre would not otherwise have access to – for example, from RECs and farmers' organisations in the case of ECDPM's food security programme. At least in some cases, the benefits are mutual.

Legitimacy: In this context, many respondents mention ECDPM's partnerships with African institutions as a source of legitimacy. Big European names have a similar effect (albeit for different reasons). As one respondent noted:

> "Working with big thinkers and big names (ODI, DIE etc.) in consortia on, for example, the European Reports on Development [means that] ECDPM gets higher traction, and for the EU it is more comfortable, as it incorporates a 'balance' of views from various think tanks."

Chapter conclusions

We conclude that at least some of the relationships that ECDPM has cultivated with European and African partners have been of mutual benefit. Increased effectiveness and legitimacy have impacted positively on all sides, and the partnerships have contributed to the achievement of goals across the board. That said, we also conclude that ECDPM's partnership approach has been more opportunistic and responsive to demand than systematic. This approach has been underpinned by realism in terms of the extent to which a think tank such as ECDPM can build and sustain partner capacity amidst competing priorities and limited resources.

Looking forward, strong partnerships with African think tanks are a *sine qua non* if work within Africa is to be at the core of the Centre's future niche. ECDPM has generally established a reputation as a collaborator rather than a competitor, respecting local ownership. Joint working between an African think tank and ECDPM increases the African knowledge, legitimacy, and hence effectiveness, of ECDPM; and joint working increases the ability of the African think tank to understand and engage with European policymakers.

Successful partnerships generally require personal relations, contacts, and networking – and so considerable time, effort, and funding. As a relatively small organisation, ECDPM inevitably has to concentrate in order to achieve impact. Focusing on the AUC and RECs has given the opportunity of impact beyond national borders, with actors which the EU, as a regional organisation itself, consider important. Linking with the other members of the ETTG has been important to widen contacts, to spread ECDPM's messages, and to keep ECDPM at the cutting edge.

In the chapter on recommendations, we recommend that ECDPM continue to emphasise and invest in partnerships, ensuring there is greater clarity and focus in terms of why partnerships are pursued, and to what end; and that partnerships should be developed as a clear means to delivering wider strategic goals, as opposed to as ends in themselves.

7. Organisational effectiveness

The evaluation's ToRs ask us to assess the effectiveness of the Centre in light of innovations in organisational capacity introduced during the strategic period under review. The ToRs specifically identify ECDPM's communication and knowledge management systems, its programme structure and its mechanisms for staff support and progress review. In this chapter, we cover each of these issues in turn, after first discussing the issues of coherence and funding.

Findings and analysis

Coherence

An important marker of ECDPM's coherence lies in its methods, which provide it with a sense of identity and continuity. However, there are three inevitable pull factors that generate pressure to apply these methods to an ever-increasing range of issues.

The complexity of the operational environment. ECDPM operates in European and African environments that are politically and architecturally complex. In these environments, ECDPM engages with a wide range of European and African stakeholders, each with its own agenda and priorities. This leads to very wide-ranging requests for support.

ECDPM's service delivery arrangements. Ten of these stakeholders – the ten European countries that provide ECDPM with its institutional funding – have an ECDPM service delivery entitlement. As part of the Centre's quest to stay 'current', ECDPM encourages these partners to make these requests "on an *'ad hoc'* basis in line with the urgency of rapidly evolving policy agendas and processes."[23] ECDPM and interviewees from these 'institutional partners' confirmed that this service delivery arrangement maintains a mutual interest, fosters trust and good relations, and keeps ECDPM close to actual policy agendas.

Although most institutional partners tend to make their requests in line with the annual list of areas in which ECDPM invites requests, the demands and expectations of external stakeholders do cause "almost constant pressure to extend to new topics."[24] First, ECDPM is reluctant to say 'no' too often, and this leads to the occasional acceptance of requests that

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[23] ECDPM Note in relation to policy support to Belgium. (September 2015)
[24] SEEA internal assessment, pages 1 and 11.

are not part of ECDPM's original work plans. Second, these assignments often inspire ECDPM to undertake *additional* work that builds upon the original request, without necessarily being covered by the direct service delivery arrangement. This is seen to add to the pressure to ever-expand ECDPM's breadth of work.

The non-linearity of policy development processes. To be successful in the fluid field of policy development processes, the Centre employs an opportunistic iterative problem solving approach. This non-linear adaptive approach is almost inevitable in the complex and ever-evolving world in which ECDPM operates, and has become an important part of ECDPM's organisational culture. This approach achieves most if iterative choices are inspired by clearly defined long-term outcomes (themselves open to change if the case for change is strong, explicit and evidence-informed). Despite these being spelled out in its results framework, there is still a risk of mission drift.

To cope with this demand-side pressure, ECDPM has structured most (but by no means all) of its work within five programmes, each of which supports a select few 'policy processes' that often but not always have a clear connecting narrative. Programmes have their own work plans and are expected to operate in line with all-Centre guidance. Specifically, all programmes and cross-Centre initiatives are expected to consider four cross-cutting themes (discussed earlier in this report); monitor progress against a detailed strategic results framework; and achieve five 'development outcomes' (also discussed earlier). Work plans, a mid-term review and a programme self-assessment provide further guidance. Moreover, there is the encouragement to take a regional approach, and there is a desire to be "ahead of the curve". Together, the guidance is complex, multidimensional and voluminous, and there is no apparent agreed-upon hierarchy among strategic documents and guidance.

ECDPM's deliberately broad strategy and multiplicity of Centre-wide guidance mean that ECDPM has many possible lines of sight from its activities to its desired outcomes. Consequently, it is challenging for ECDPM's leadership to determine whether or not a work stream fits within ECDPM's remit; and it is also tricky to develop clear 'go/no-go' criteria that would allow for consistent decentralised decision-making. This threatens ECDPM's overall programmatic coherence.

Conclusions
We agree with the frequently expressed sense that ECDPM's current all-Centre guidance is too complex, multidimensional and voluminous, and that this causes a general lack of awareness, ownership and discipline in relation to these various items of guidance. We conclude that ECDPM would benefit from a singular set of core guidance principles that could more effectively ensure a coherent Centre-wide direction of travel.

In the chapter on recommendations, we recommend that ECDPM replaces its overly complex formal and informal guidance with a single set of core guidance principles; align all accountability and planning tools and systems with these principles; and monitor that the work is indeed in line with these principles.

Funding

The strategy period 2012-2016 coincided with a global and a European climate of budget constraints, and an evermore challenging environment for development finance. Despite an increased prominence of the need for 'honest brokers' in the increasingly complex,

knowledge-intensive and fragmented multi-stakeholder field of international cooperation, this has affected think-tanks.

As confirmed, inter-alia, by the 2014 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, there has been a steady decline in recent years in the number of new think tanks. Existing think tanks are facing dramatic shifts in funding patterns globally, with governments cutting funds for public policy research, and private sector increasingly limiting its grants to project-specific actions. This is true despite the increasing importance of think tanks at national and global level: "*Across both developed and developing countries, governments and individual policymakers face the common problem of bringing expert knowledge to bear in government decision-making. Policymakers need reliable, accessible, and useful information about the societies they govern. They also need to know how current policies are working, as well as possible alternatives and their likely costs and consequences.*" Despite this, "[…] *decreased funding and operating support has put think tanks at risk of supporting the status quo in policy debate, rather than providing alternatives. […] Government budget cuts threaten research and undermine the overall outcomes*" and the crucial "independence" factor.

In the European context, the closure of FRIDE, a member of the European Think Tank Group, serves as a reminder that the trend to reduce or restrict funding for think tanks carries real risks.[25] FRIDE arguably made major contributions to shaping the debate on Europe's external actions, and was an important member of the ETTG, but funding constraints forced FRIDE to cease its think tank operations in December 2015.

Findings and analysis

Funding Sources
Notwithstanding the challenging funding environment, ECDPM's annual budget has grown every year in the course of the current strategy (see table below), and realised funding always exceeded budgeted funding. The Centre's funding in 2015 was nearly 30% higher than it had been in 2011. This growth is in keeping with a longer-term growth trend for ECDPM, and is reflected in ECDPM's increase in staffing numbers.

This funding consisted of interest payments, institutional funding, and project and programme funding.

ECDPM income, in €1000 and percentage of annual total

	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	€	%	€	%	€	%	€	%	€	%
Interest	771	14	725	13	652	10	98	2	10	0
Institutional funding	2,916	55	2,872	52	3,668	57	4,449	69	4,388	64
Programme funding	675	13	947	17	817	13	730	11	1,382	20
Project funding[26]	977	18	983	18	1,259	20	1,192	18	1,098	16
Total income	**5,339**		**5,527**		**6,396**		**6,469**		**6,878**	

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[25] For explanations from FRIDE on their closure please go to: http://fride.org
[26] *Programme funding* is multi-annual funding for a 'programme of work' related to one or more of ECDPM's thematic programmes. The largest programme funder of ECDPM is DFID-UK. *Project funding* is funding for specific initiatives that can either be reactive to opportunities or ECDPM going out with proposals that are then funded.

Institutional funding[27] was provided by ten European countries (referred to as ECDPM's 'institutional partners')[28] and constituted roughly 64% of the overall income for 2015. Ten European donors is an impressive number, and demonstrates the strong and widespread support ECDPM receives. This funding is provided by departments or ministries for development cooperation, an interesting dynamic when set against the evolving global shift from "development" towards "international" cooperation.

Institutional funding includes a 10%-20% earmark provision of services to each of the institutional partners, based on pre-determined fee rates and guided by an annual list of issues that the Centre aims to focus on. These tend to be requests for near-term and time-bound analysis, policy input and the facilitation of various types of meetings. The requests provide knowledge expansion opportunities to the Centre, but also increase the necessity to 'deliver' in shorter time frames. The Centre and its institutional partners both find this a suitable, useful and mutually beneficial arrangement, and this partly explains why ECDPM is often seen as "different from the normal crowd of think tanks and consultants". One partner felt that the services rendered were worth the full institutional funding, rather than merely the service delivery percentage of it:

> "If we were to go to a consultancy company, we would never get this level of interaction, or the quality, experience and the level of networks that they have – and these were key considerations when we signed up." This helps to explain why country governments continued the partnership "even though we have discontinued most funding to academic institutions" (each quote is from a different institutional partner).

The past years confirm that institutional funding has had a highly positive impact on ECDPM's ability to deliver its outcomes. The continued partnerships with a broad range of institutional partners reaffirms the value of a strong measure of independence. It allows ECDPM to present itself as independent rather than beholden to donor preferences. This strengthens ECDPM's credibility. In addition, such funding has enabled ECDPM to:

* Develop African relations and partnerships at an appropriate speed, even if the appropriate speed is slow. Without good relations in both Europe and Africa, ECDPM would not be able to do its facilitation work.
* Contribute to slow and incremental changes in lengthy policy processes, even if these processes are not immediate priorities for its funders.
* Respond in a prompt and flexible manner to requests, and to undertake delicate political work quickly.
* Innovate in the EU, and say things that are important to Africa but that the EU has not yet taken on board (such as things about the role of minerals in economic transformation).
* Pursue issues that are contentious and that many of the primary stakeholders are unable to pursue (such as the context analyses in relation to ACP).
* Invest in invisible back door support to policy processes and to the transition from policy to practice.

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[27] In line with the terms used in the ECDPM Financial report 2014, 'institutional funding' refers to funding that provides support to the Centre's strategy and that is more flexible in allocation than programme-specific or short term funding. All sources of funding to ECDPM come with conditions, arrangements, reporting requirements and agreements.
[28] Netherlands, Finland, Portugal, Sweden, Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Luxembourg and recently Denmark (all EU), and Switzerland.

- Invest in important internal primary processes that enable ECDPM to optimise its effectiveness as a think and do tank (such as Communication and Knowledge Management).

Whilst the portfolio of ten institutional partners is impressive and an illustration of ECDPM's broad relevance, the contributions from these partners vary widely and the *relative* portion in ECDPM's total funding from the Netherlands has increased each year, in the course of the current strategy period, from 40% in 2011 to close to 50% in 2015. This is a risk, but it is not unusual: many internationally renowned think tanks rely largely on a single institutional benefactor, and often to a larger extent than the Centre.

EU institutions are a major source of **project and programme funding** (e.g. over €630,000 in 2014). When applying for EU funding, ECDPM avoids ad hoc consultancies and instead bids for work that would strengthen ECDPM's niche as a development-related and Europe- and Africa-focused think and do tank.

More in general, project or programme-specific funding increased from €1.652m in 2011 to €2.480m in 2015 emanated from diverse sources. This increase was not accidental: "In the past years we increasingly invested in sensitising and training our staff on fundraising by organising training with external experts and transferring the collective experiences and lessons learnt on fundraising to our staff by our most experienced staff members."[29] It was not optional either: each programme is expected to mobilise project funding and Heads of Programmes (and, at times, their staff) spend a good deal of time seeking short-term and more restricted financing resources for specific activities; as well as ensuring continued institutional funding. We find that not all staff seeking resources have a full skill set required for fundraising; that time spent on raising finances is time taken away from core substantive work; and that there is no 'development office' that provides support to fundraising efforts.

The amount of programme staff's time spent on fundraising raises real dilemmas between time use and the need to obtain financing on the one hand, and the need to remain as close as possible to the core mission of the Centre on the other hand, to keep the list of activities manageable, and the ensure quality work. These dilemmas have been mostly appropriately balanced – but not without a strain on the overall work load of staff and managers.

Transparency and accountability
ECDPM has achieved high standards in **transparency and accountability**. The Centre has been repeatedly awarded with 5 stars for funding transparency by Transparify[30] (2013, 2014, 2015). Robust external auditing with unqualified positive auditor's statements, and financial reporting mechanisms are in place. This no doubt explains, in part, how and why ECDPM has managed to buck the trends for both institutional funding and project-based financing.

Conclusions
We conclude that ECDPM's strong base of institutional funding is crucial to its success. It enables the Centre to ensure independence in sometimes highly polarised debates, to build trust among key players, to fulfil its mission, to deliver on its programmatic and thematic areas, and to maintain its niche as a non-partisan knowledge broker and facilitator.

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[29] International Relations & Partnerships Internal Assessment, 2012-2015, September 2015, page 2. Note that this doubling was not gradual growth, and that the Mid-Term Review of the 2012-2016 ECDPM Strategy still sounded worried ("results have been limited", on page 4).

[30] See www.transparify.org. Transparify rates financial transparency of major think tanks globally.

The continued ability of ECDPM to attract institutional funding from multiple governments and the EU is a strong feature and represents, overall, enduring trust, and a solid appreciation of what the Centre delivers, how it manages its finances, and underscores the necessity and the usefulness of having a credible, non-partisan and independent think tank addressing a range of policy/practice dilemmas. It manages to remain non-partisan, and is not beholden to particular national or institutional messages or story-lines.

Furthermore, institutional support allows an essential element of ECDPM's approach to continue: it allows risk taking (exploring areas deemed important but not necessarily attractive; or exploring institutional relationships) and funds more intangible areas such as building partnerships or reinforcing institutional development, which are not always able to attract shorter-term or project funds.

There is strong justification for ECDPM to continue to seek this sort of funding. ECDPM's continuing ability to inspire a wide range of EU Member States to commit to multiyear institutional funding is impressive, and the expressed need for this sort of funding continues to be credible. At the same time, even if it appears that some funders may intend a ring-fence approach to ECDPM specifically, funding contexts are changing and ECDPM cannot assume that all of its current agreements will all be extended beyond their scheduled end.

In a shifting funding environment, the Centre has managed to mobilise substantial *smart funding*. It will need to maintain this vein, even if unpredictable future shifts in focus and amounts of available funding will pose dilemmas and challenge the Centre "system" for smart funding.

In the chapter on recommendations, we recommend that ECDPM considers seriously the increasing risks to think tank funding generally; continue to diversify income streams; consider upgrading funding structures and management systems in anticipation of likely changes to the future funding environment; and continue to try to balance work load issues related to fundraising activities.

External communication

ECDPM's 2012-2016 Knowledge Management and Communication (KMC) Strategy identified four communication-related areas for improvement:

- Enhanced use of social and other digital media.
- Targeted interactions with journalists and media more generally.
- A more user friendly and technically advanced website.
- Building on past success and consolidating what has worked well for the Centre.

In its Mid-Term Review, ECDPM also expressed concern that the Centre was "not sufficiently visible". This concern found its way into the evaluation ToRs.

Findings and analysis
In all four areas, we found ECDPM to have registered significant progress. Detailed ECDPM documentation provides strong evidence to support this finding. Furthermore, the anecdotal evidence we were able to gather from interviews supports our overall finding that ECDPM is highly visible among key stakeholders in its areas of operations.

All in all, **social media engagement** has been pivotal in enhancing ECDPM's visibility, and the team has made great strides in improving the monitoring impact in this area. We found that both the supply and uptake of ECDPM's social and digital media engagement[31] is steadily increasing, with its footprint extending beyond the mid-level policy experts that ECDPM considers its primary audience. This has provided ECDPM staff with incentives to engage on social media, including via blogs, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> "[Sharing] our work on external blogs widely read by development people [...] has significantly increased our visibility beyond Brussels and led to invitations to meetings with our target audiences" [32].

The available evidence also validates ECDPM's claims that its **media presence** has steadily increased. Again, this increase is well-documented. There is also widespread acknowledgment of **the new website** as a significant improvement on the previous site. The upgrade has significantly increased visitor numbers[33], thanks in part to ECDPM's intelligent investment in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO).

ECDPM's new forms of communication complement **the Centre's more traditional knowledge products** (*Weekly Compass*, *GREAT Insights* and policy briefs), which maintain strong brand recognition and reach, and which are considered of consistently high quality. These regular products are appreciated – both as a resource on new and emerging developments, and as a channel that enable partners to strengthen the visibility of their perspectives (via interviews and guest columns).

The effects of these different types of progress mutually reinforce each other. ECDPM has recognised that it can no longer rely on singular communication mechanisms: it is the *combination* of these various modes of communication that has enabled ECDPM to deepen its engagement with existing audiences and extend its reach to new stakeholders.

Many of ECDPM's programme staff feel the benefits of the Centre's enhanced visibility and improved real time awareness of external developments. Accounts of consolidated campaigns (and particularly the ones on EPAs and on the EU-Africa Summit) illustrate that ECDPM's strategic communication has been instrumental to the Centre's success towards achieving the overarching development outcome of 'more inclusive and better-informed policy dialogues on global development challenges involving actors from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific'.

To further strengthen ECDPM's outreach, two communication officers have been embedded to work with programme staff to think about communication requirements throughout an initiative's life cycle. We highlight this because it is a particularly important change in the process of mainstreaming communication in ECDPM's work. This support has improved

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[31] Tweeting and blogging are not the only 'modern' communication tools that ECDPM has adopted. Infographs are increasingly popular among programme staff, and we found a range of videoblogs, podcasts, animation films and multimedia guides, for example on 'How the EU makes decisions in Africa' and 'How Africa speaks with one voice'.

[32] ECDPM, Food Security Internal Assessment, 2012-2015, September 2015, page 3. Pages 9-10 of the KM&C Internal Assessment 2012-2015 provide an impressive overview of key institutional and individual followers.

[33] For data on Website visits, social media impact, etc, see KM&C Internal Assessment 2012-2015, 23 April 2015, pages 8-10, with a summary of the full statistical analysis on page 14; and KMC key metric 2012-2015, pages 1-2.

timing and provided focus in relation to an initiative's dissemination of key messages, contributing to higher visibility and optimised uptake.

We have also observed communication-related challenges and gaps in the course of this evaluation.

Among the challenges observed is the tension within ECDPM between its two stated roles as a public policy and practice 'think and do tank', and as a non-partisan broker. This tension manifests itself in concerns that ECDPM should not be too visible as this could impact negatively on its ability to act as a non-partisan facilitator. We find that these two roles are not incompatible, and they do not obviate the imperative of ECDPM to be a more strategic communicator. Evaluations of think tanks around the world – including a seminal study conducted by ECDPM itself in conjunction with ODI – have demonstrated that strategic communication is critical to enhancing policy influence.[34] As such, strategic communication, and not necessarily always through public channels, will help to maintain and strengthen ECDPM's unique 'thinking and doing' niche.

Another challenge is the differential levels of understanding on the role of communication and stakeholder engagement across ECDPM, indicating a lack of ECDPM-wide unanimity as to why Communication is such a core primary process. Despite this challenge, we find that there has been sustained buy-in from the highest levels of management, as evidenced by the management decisions to invest in building communication capacity from its institutional budget funding.

A third challenge relates to ECDPM's 'face time'. For an honest broker, personalised contact is critical, and ECDPM's visibility and standing are largely a function of ECDPM's direct engagement. Personal connections are clearly key, and select senior staff are well known and highly trusted. Beyond these personal connections, we found that ECDPM could benefit from stronger and more consistent convening of key stakeholders – in which the emerging and final results of ECDPM's various work streams are showcased and discussed.

Finally, on a more operational note, we found that users of ECDPM's knowledge products were often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of resources at hand.

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[34] Young, J., Hauck, V. Engel, P., *Final report of the external evaluation of the Think Tank Initiative*, London, Maastricht: ODI, ECDPM, 2013.

> **Communication as a downstream afterthought – the case of PERISA**
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> ECDPM and SAIIA conducted a ground-breaking study on the Political Economic of Regional Integration in South Africa (PERISA), commissioned by the EU Delegation to South Africa for the EU-South Africa Dialogue Facility. Particularly important is the overarching view that national governments' support for RECs, as articulated at summits, is a relatively weak driver of regional integration on the ground, whereas there are stronger drivers in the interests of important business sectors (for example for trade corridors).
>
> The findings were interesting and potentially useful. PERISA was also effective in attracting the attention of the AfDB, DFID and others, and enabling ECDPM to be well-positioned for the larger PERIA study. However, ECDPM created few opportunities for key southern African actors to debate these findings, partly because "our budget was exhausted and we were too busy doing other [new] stuff". Consequently, PERISA's findings have not (yet) had a local impact, and "the factsheets we produced were neither used nor updated." (Both quotes are from internal interviews.) This might change when national Planning Commissions discuss PERISA's findings, but that is starting only now.
>
> The lesson to learn is that investment in studies without factoring in communication planning from the outset, coupled with the ring-fencing of adequate budgetary resources, will result in less than optimal impact. In the case of PERISA, communication was considered downstream, as an afterthought, with the result that its findings are not well known among key southern African stakeholders.

Conclusions

We conclude that ECDPM has rigorously followed up on the previous organisational evaluation, which stated that ECDPM should "maintain and, where possible, strengthen its high-performing team on knowledge management and communication, as it is one of the Centre's critical success factors."[35]

In all the communication-related areas for improvement that ECDPM had identified at the beginning of its new strategy period, it has met, and in some cases exceeded, expectations. In the process, ongoing challenges are being addressed and the prospects for even stronger external communication the next strategic period are bright. The building blocks are firmly in place.

In the chapter dedicated to recommendations, we propose a few ways in which ECDPM can further consolidate the gains to date. These include paying more attention to stakeholder information needs and improving usage analytics; embedding communication in all management and decision-making structures for improved planning and implementation; and establishing a Meetings and Events programme.

Knowledge management

A key feature of the current strategy has been the introduction of a series of KM-related innovations aimed at improving internal collaboration, increasing the efficiency of business processes, fostering a culture of ongoing learning, and capturing tacit knowledge towards

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[35] Striking the Balance: External Evaluation of the ECDPM 2007 – 2010 Final Report April 2011, page 82.

improved reporting of results. Within ECDPM, KM is viewed as a cross-cutting priority, with internal as well as external dimensions. Ownership for KM is therefore shared across the organization, led by a multidisciplinary team made up of staff members from Corporate Services, Information Technology, and the KM and Communication teams.

At the beginning of the strategy period, the emphasis was very much on harnessing technological innovations to help improve KM. At the time, ECDPM operated with an uncomfortable combination of individual filing systems and a network-hosted storage system that was cumbersome to access and difficult to search. To address these concerns, the KM team was designated to design and implement a series of technological innovations and changes in working practice, aimed at improving the speed, efficiency, coherence and impact of ECDPM's operations.

The centrepiece of the new KM system is ECDPM's Information and Knowledge Management Exchange (IMAKE). IMAKE was officially launched in 2012, with a focus on priority applications such as the new corporate Intranet, a personalized workspace for each staff member, a reporting system, a travel planning and processing system, project and programme sites, and an invoice and form approval system. Work is underway on a number of other innovations, such as a 'dashboard' for quantitative monitoring, a tender information portal and a contacts database.

The entire IMAKE system is built around a cloud-based Google Apps suite (Mail, Chat/Hangout, Calendar, Google+), which aims to provide a seamless platform for internal and external communications and collaboration.

As part of IMAKE, ECDPM's Reporting System is a major innovation. It is designed to enable staff to report on key outputs and internal learning, and includes possibilities for documenting tacit 'back-room' knowledge gained from 'in-the-kitchen' work that is usually not captured. The Reporting System also allows external feedback to be recorded. Staff can report on four types of outputs, linked to the 2012-2016 Strategy: Write (Blog, Report, Discussion papers); Listen & Speak (events organised or attended); Advice (meetings with partners, briefings); and 'Internal' (reports useful for internal assessment, key learnings).

Findings and analysis
In our review of internal documents and discussions with relevant staff members, we found that overall, the ensemble of innovations introduced in 2012 have had a significant positive impact. ECDPM is steadily progressing towards modernisation of its KM systems and processes. The small IMAKE team is highly skilled and motivated, and has a clear understanding of the needs of ECDPM programme and administrative staff.

Specifically, we found that the Google Apps suite has proven to be relatively easy to learn, has saved time and improved collaborative efficiency. It also strengthened ECDPM's protection of the integrity of its data and led to quantum improvements in in-house search capability. Some applications, such as the Calendar function, have quickly become '*must* use' tools.

The KM team has highlighted a few teething problems it is working hard to resolve – such as the difficulty of working offline, loss of speed in working on complex documents, challenges of formatting, and concerns over data silos. Senior ECDPM executives have been identified as lagging behind in the use of Drive and Docs, and the KM team has targeted the group for additional training and support, including on a one-on-one basis.

The in-house team has made good headway in transforming the vision of a new Reporting System into a workable reality. Conceptually, the thinking behind the system is highly innovative. Inevitably, however, there have been challenges at operational level, not least in user uptake. User feedback has included reports that the system is mainly limited to the external reporting process[36]; that data entry into the system is often delegated to executive assistants; and that it generates too much information and lacks user-friendliness. Further work is needed to link feedback to the four categories of output reporting internally, as well as to refine the internal output categories themselves.

As the IMAKE team has noted, systematised planning and regular reporting has not traditionally been part of ECDPM's DNA. Bringing about the cultural shift required to report more usefully using a new system is a common organisational challenge that will be addressed through regular engagement in the Programme Management Meetings and monitored closely by the new LQS Unit, which was established towards the end of the 2012-2016 strategy period to lead ECDPM's drive towards becoming an effective learning organization.

We have also found a delay in transitioning from the old contacts database system to a new application to be housed within IMAKE. Management of ECDPM's external contacts constitutes an important function that is directly related to our finding that the dissemination of ECDPM's knowledge output needs to be better targeted.

Conclusions
As ECDPM's knowledge management system is young and still under development, it is too early to draw definitive conclusions as to whether it will ultimately live up to its evident promise to enable the institution as a whole to collaborate better, communicate better and better evidence ECDPM's contributions to wider outcomes. What we have seen gives strong grounds for optimism, and we do not believe there is reason to advocate for a complete change of tack.

We are encouraged by the establishment of the LQS Unit, which is referred to in more detail to in the section of the report that discussed quality support and M&E. We consider it premature to pronounce on the performance and impact of the LQS Unit. However, we are able to conclude that the Unit is an important innovation, as it is mandated to address both internal dimensions of KM as defined above, as well as external aspects – such as improved reporting of ECDPM's results on an ongoing basis, and better stakeholder engagement towards sharper dissemination and the internalization of client feedback.

In terms of the technological innovations, and on the basis of the findings and analysis above, we are able to conclude that while progress is uneven depending on the specific tools and applications being assessed, the overall direction of travel is positive and we expect the impact of the innovations to be fully visible in the course of the next strategic period.

In the chapter on recommendations, we urge ECDPM to continue to engage staff on the knowledge management strategy and to take on board user feedback in a timely and systematic manner. Important applications, notably the new contacts database system, should be given greater priority. The Reporting System should be further simplified to make it easier to use. Efforts to bring about an organisational culture shift should continue, led by

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[36] Though, at the time of writing this report, ECDPM had begun using these reports as an input to periodic one-hour progress reviews of policy processes as well.

the new LQS Unit, and with intensive engagement with particular user groups for which uptake of the innovations remains a challenge.

Programme structure

ECDPM's current programme structure followed a 2011 decision to transform the two existing programmes and to add three new programmes. The resultant five programmes deal with (i) EU external action; (ii) conflict and security; (iii) Africa change dynamics; (iv) economic transformation; and (v) agriculture and food security. In addition, the Centre undertook significant pilot and cross-programme work outside of these programmes.

The evaluation ToRs asked us about the pertinence, effectiveness and efficiency of ECDPM's programme structure in relation to four distinct requirements.

1. Delivering outputs and outcomes
2. Ensuring focus and coherence across the board
3. Promoting joint action when needed
4. Maximising the impact of the Centre *'as a whole'*

This section covers each of them in turn, drawing on a combination of interviews and the team's experiential knowledge in relation to organisational structures.

Findings and analysis

1. Delivering outputs and outcomes
We have not come across major drawbacks of ECDPM's current programme structure, and found that, to an extent, it offered the considerable asset of focus.

ECDPM operates *very* flexibly and iteratively, and does not have many well-defined criteria on the basis of which to make decisions. In such an environment, staff members need a structure to maintain a sense of direction and belonging. For most people and on a day-to-day basis, the programme structure and the programme managers provide this. This helps people to maintain the focus required to produce outputs and raise funds.

2. Ensuring focus and coherence across the board
It is hard to see how ECDPM's current portfolio of work fits in a connecting narrative (see the section on 'coherence'). This is a problem, but it is not the consequence of the programme structure.

We find that the absence of strong all-Centre coherence has meant that staff members benefited from the focus and coherence that there respective programmes provided – even if work streams within programmes are not always clearly connected.

3. Promoting joint action when needed and 4. Maximising the impact of the Centre "as a whole".
We find that the programme structure has not divided the Centre into a collection of self-standing silos, and cross-Centre cooperation is one of ECDPM's impressive strengths. This observation applies in general, as well as in the case of specific projects and initiatives such as the Swedish-funded PERIA and the EU-ACP think piece. This cross-Centre cooperation seems to be due to:

- A sense of unity and an inclination to cooperate. It has been easy to recognize this overall *esprit de corps*, and we have found this more striking than occasional accounts of internal friction (which are a feature of almost all organisations).
- Common interests;
- The ability of a few senior members of staff to get people to accept assignments that are beyond their core tasks; and
- The willingness among ECDPM's junior staff to assume very high workloads, which enables ECDPM to consider much of this work as 'extra'.

We find ECDPM's cross-Centre work to be useful because it helps to utilise expertise to the full, allows for Centre-wide learning, strengthens the professional development of ECDPM's junior staff, and fosters ECDPM's *esprit de corps*. However, the managed matrix-type of work is not easy in an organisation as big as ECDPM, and carries risks as it is distracting from programme work (which is what staff are primarily accountable for), is time-consuming (also because of the additional need for internal communication) and is sometimes frustrating (if the tasks are not sufficiently clear or if the work does not really get off the ground, or if it is just too much and leads to a sense of burnout).

Programme-inspired structures are common and, in principle, credible. In the case of ECDPM, the structure works reasonably well, and as such we see no compelling reason to change it.

Conclusions

Changing a structure requires considerable thought and time investment, and should only be considered if there is strong evidence that restructuring would impart significant benefits and advantages. If such a compelling case for change exists, we have not been made aware of it.

As such, our conclusion is limited to indicating that ECDPM would benefit from clear limits to the number of unconnected topics covered within each programme, and to the volume of ECDPM's cross-Centre work, as a wide and insufficiently inter-connected portfolio risks overstretching the Centre's capacity.

In the context of the ongoing planning in relation to ECDPM's new strategy, we are aware that there are advocates of as well as opponents to ECDPM's current programme structure. We emphasise that we reached our conclusion independent of either group.

Quality support and progress review

This evaluation's ToRs asked: "How solid and effective are our systems for ensuring quality support and progress review?" In subsequent conversations, we understood that 'quality support systems' are intended as 'quality assurance systems'.

Findings and analysis

Quality assurance

At the start of a work cycle, ECDPM arranges a cross-programme peer review of each programme's work plan. This eliminates the risk of self-serving work plans and serves as a quality assurance mechanism.

In the development stage of ECDPM's products and services, support is primarily provided within programmes, but also by a few senior members of staff who have all-Centre responsibilities and, when appropriate, across programmes (facilitated by ECDPM's *esprit de corps*).

At the end of the pipeline, the programme manager is responsible for the quality assurance of its programme's knowledge products. In nearly all cases this means, at the very least, a review of each product by a senior member of staff. This person often works within the same programme, but there are also regular reviews from knowledgeable people from outside of the programme. This cross-programme peer review system is currently optional and based on people's awareness of other people's fields of expertise. This works well for small organisations but leaves gaps once an organisation exceeds a certain size. As ECDPM may have reached this size, we understand that the Centre's new Learning and Quality Support Unit is planning to introduce a lean and simple clearinghouse system that is based on a checklist with approval requirements and an overview of in-house fields of expertise.

The quality assurance system of larger cross-Centre initiatives is more formalised, but currently more *ad hoc*, than the programme-specific quality assurance, and we have come across two examples where this quality assurance would have benefited from an earlier start.

Conclusions
Almost all external interviewees spoke highly of the quality of most of ECDPM's knowledge products and we have come across only very few examples of work that would have benefited from more rigorous quality assurance. We conclude that the quality of the Centre's work does not pose a high organisational risk.

Progress review

Findings and analysis
In the past, ECDPM's senior management team would regularly spend time with programme teams to jointly interrogate programme progress. This mechanism was terminated when ECDPM established a Programme Management Group. However, this group has not conducted periodic and systematic programme-based progress reviews in the course of the review period (though we note that there are plans to introduce such a review system in the coming period). Such reviews would be a useful addition to ECDPM's mid-term strategy review and internal assessments – both of which have proven to be very thorough exercises in the current review period.

Internal interviews suggest that there is a degree of confidence in the newly established Learning and Quality Support (LQS) unit that has been tasked with strengthening the Centre's culture around M&E-related work. The impression we arrived at was that this unit will ensure that, in the future, progress review exercises such as the ones mentioned above will benefit from ECDPM's new reporting system and, more generally, from the Centre's increasing focus on monitoring and evaluation.

The coming year will reveal the extent to which the LQS Unit gets a real say in the organisation (including as the custodian and socialiser of the Centre's Theory of Change); the extent to which its tool set will move beyond output-focused indicators; and the extent to which external feedback will be fully integrated into ECDPM's M&E practice whenever this is appropriate and cost-effective.

Conclusions
We conclude that ECDPM's renewed focus on M&E in general, and the establishment of the LQS Unit are likely to significantly strengthen the Centre's M&E function in the course of the coming year.

8. Conclusions

Previous chapters have focused on the questions posed in the evaluation ToRs. In the text that follows, we provide a succinct, aggregate view on ECDPM's pertinence, relevance and impact as an institution.

Overall, we conclude that ECDPM is a well-known, highly visible, independent and non-partisan 'think and do tank' that contributes consistently and meaningfully to a range of development-relevant policy processes within and outside of the EU institutions.

Its access to, contacts within, knowledge of and ability to contribute to the work of the European institutions distinguish it as arguably *the* leading development-focused think tank in its field. There are few, if any, direct competitors.

ECDPM's contribution is all the more noteworthy in light of the complex and rapidly evolving context, within as well as beyond Europe's borders. It has been able to effectively adapt to new and emerging realities (among them the ongoing shift from 'international development' to 'international cooperation') while maintaining the Centre's established mission and principles, and consolidating its unique niche.

Key stakeholders within the EU institutions, EU member states and a range of EU, African and ACP institutions recognise this unique niche, and confirm that it is based on:

- ECDPM's understanding of, insights in and access to the EU institutions. It has considerable leverage and convening power within these institutions, and plays a valuable role as a 'supplier of thinking'.
- ECDPM's knowledge of ACP, and of EU-ACP and EU-Africa relations; and ECDPM's increasingly strong relations with a range of African institutions.
- ECDPM's role as a non-partisan, independent 'think and do tank' that moves beyond the generation of knowledge and instead uses a politically aware and interconnected mix of knowledge contributions, brokerage and policy process facilitation to contribute to development-relevant policy outcomes and policy implementation.

We recognise that, in the highly complex environment in which ECDPM operates, much depends on the political situation and the interests and actions of the different parties. This inevitably limits the extent of ECDPM's agency. Nonetheless, we conclude that ECDPM's contribution to development-relevant processes has been significant. In particular:

- ECDPM contributes to well-informed and content-based policy dialogue, with effective participation of a wide range of European and African actors. When making these contributions, and where necessary, ECDPM has been willing to say things that other stakeholders cannot afford to say.
- ECDPM's analytical work helps policymakers and implementers better understand why policies struggle to be implemented, and how policy-related changes and

transformations evolve. This work contributes to a narrowing of the gap between policy statements and practice.

- ECDPM has supported EU institutions to move towards more integrated and coherent policies, by addressing the quandaries of striking a balance between competing interests and the dilemmas these create in relation to upholding the values that the EU institutions strive to uphold.

The outcomes to which ECDPM has contributed are underpinned by the Centre's gradual shift over time from the ACP countries to Africa. This shift is in line with the evolving discourse on EU-Africa relations, as well as the ongoing reflection on the future of the EU-ACP partnership.

We conclude that the Centre's ability to achieve these outcomes has been underpinned by three key enablers:

- A range of mutually beneficial partnerships. As ECDPM is not primarily a conventional capacity building organisation, these partnerships tend to be most beneficial if the partners are already relatively strong.
- ECDPM's access to institutional funding. This enabled the Centre to maintain its non-partisan positioning; to invest in building relationships and to facilitate the provision of back door support; to act fast when needed; and to maintain a role in very long-term processes.
- Recent investments in ECDPM's organisational capacity. In recent years, the Centre has further professionalised its external communication, including significantly modernising and intensifying its strategic use of digital and social media. The Centre's internal knowledge management has also benefited from a far-reaching upgrade, and a number of tools and applications have improved collaborative efficiency.

In the process, ECDPM has had to face a number of challenges. Among them are:

- Too many forms of guidance, combined with the lack of a single set of *core* guidance principles that ensures a coherent Centre-wide direction of travel, and a connecting narrative among the various fields of work that is insufficiently strong. This results in a risk of a fragmentation of effort and unreasonable workloads.
- An absence of systematic progress tracking that may limit the Centre's ability to maximise its results, and that certainly limits the visibility of those results.
- A limited ability to include gender dimensions systematically in its programmatic work, increasing the prospect that its knowledge products may not make a sufficiently positive contribution to gender equality and women empowerment.

And we see three risks:

- In a rapidly changing and intensely complex environment, ECDPM faces continuous pressure to widen its programmatic portfolio. Such pressure is hard to resist, and risks causing a fragmentation of effort.
- In an evolving funding environment, the current institutional funding is at risk globally. Although nothing indicates any specific risks to ECDPM, a significant reduction of such funding would force ECDPM into working quite differently – and possibly with considerably less impact.

- The global power balance is shifting. African stakeholders look increasingly at partners outside of the EU, and EU institutions face pressure to look increasingly inwards. In the very long run, there is a risk this may affect demand for ECDPM's work.

These risks are real but somewhat distant and, for now, we reiterate our overarching conclusion that ECDPM is a 'think and do tank' that fills a unique niche that enables it to make a significant contribution to development-relevant policy processes in Europe and beyond.

ECDPM can further consolidate its position as a leading think and do tank by introducing a few innovations in its ways of working as well as its programming in the next strategic period. The final chapter, which follows, offers a series of strategic recommendations for ECDPM to consider in this regard.

9. Recommendations

This chapter provides strategic recommendations that follow from the findings, analysis and conclusions presented in previous chapters. For the sake of internal consistency, the recommendations follow the same thematic sequence as the report, preceded by a single overall recommendation.

Given that the ECDPM strategy review process was being pursued in parallel with this institutional evaluation, we note that some of what we recommend may already be on the radar of ECDPM's management and staff.

While these recommendations are intended to be high-level and strategic, relating to policy and practice, we also include in this chapter a handful of key organisational recommendations. Others are embedded in the various chapters. More operational recommendations do not appear in this report, but are provided separately.

Overall recommendation
In the course of the past decade, ECDPM has steadily grown. As ECDPM's niche is likely to gain in importance in the broad, complex multi-stakeholder field of international cooperation, this growth path may continue. With or without further expansion, ECDPM has reached a size at which informal arrangements are no longer efficient. In this context, we recommend that ECDPM adopts decision-making and other key systems, policies and processes that are more formalized than they currently are, and that are commensurate with a flexible and fast-moving think and do tank.

Niche and outcomes
- Accelerate the depth and breadth of ECDPM's ability to 'think and act politically'. Integrate political analysis in internal planning processes and in the targeting and timing of external communication.
- Recognise the strategic significance of gender analysis, and bolster the Centre's ability to include gender dimensions more systematically in its programmatic work.
- Clarify the extent of "do" work, to ensure that it fits with ECDPM's Theory of Change and adds real value. In our view, ECDPM's status as a "think and do" tank depends primarily on its engagement with policymakers to ensure that they take notice of policy ideas and that the policies they devise are implementable. Going further towards implementation needs careful justification of the time required and the chance of effective replication of any pilot.

Partnerships
- Continue to emphasise and invest in partnerships, ensuring there is greater clarity and focus in how partnerships are selected and on what basis they are pursued. Above all, this is likely to be related to strengthening European and African linkages, and to the deployment of non-partisan methods. Strong partnerships with African think tanks, underpinned by joint working and respect for local ownership, are a *sine qua non* if work within Africa is to be at the core of the Centre's future niche.
- Explicitly modify the Centre's mission in this domain, and develop partnerships as a clear means to delivering wider strategic goals, as opposed to as ends in themselves, as ECDPM does not the have the capacity required to deliver *long-term overall* institutional capacity building as a goal in its own right. Be explicit as to the mutual benefits of each

partnership, as well as on the investment required, to achieve these benefits on all sides.

- Programme-specific Theories of Change will be of critical importance in providing guidance to the Centre's partnership development going forward. Greater selectivity resulting from better guidance would probably lead to a reduction in the number of partnerships, since successful partnerships generally require personal relations, contacts, networking – and so considerable time, effort, and funding.

Coherence

- Rationalize the currently overly intricate formal and informal guidance into a single set of core guidance principles that allows for easier and more coherent decision-making and for a more coherent Centre-wide direction of travel.
- Ensure that these guidance principles, ECDPM's next mission statement, long term objectives, all-Centre and programmatic Theories of Change, themes, results frameworks, planning and accountability systems and decision-making at all levels are fully aligned.
- Periodically check that the new Board's strategic oversight, and the operationalization of ECDPM's Learning and Quality Support Unit, ensure that ECDPM's various work streams *actually* take shape within the context of an overall framework that should be narrower than it currently is.

Funding

- Continue to make the case for stable institutional funding from European and EU Member States.
- Consider the increasing risks to think tank funding generally, and continue to diversify income streams; consider upgrading funding structures and management systems in anticipation of likely changes to the funding environment; and continue to try to balance work load issues related to fundraising activities.
- Consider how to reduce the programme staff's time spent on fundraising (as opposed to substantive work and delivery) and how to mitigate the risk that multiple (concurrent) requests to donors, from different parts of the Centre, wears the welcome carpet thin.

External communication

Consolidate the gains to date by paying more attention to stakeholder information needs and improving usage analytics; embedding communication in all management and decision-making structures for improved planning and implementation; and recruiting a Meetings and Events specialist to work with the programmes to develop a calendar of ECDPM meetings and events, to be convened in Brussels, Addis Ababa and elsewhere.

Knowledge management

Continue to engage staff on the knowledge management strategy and take on board user feedback in a timely and systematic manner. Important applications, notably the new contacts database system, should be given greater priority. The Reporting System should be further simplified to make it easier to use. Efforts to bring about an organisational culture shift should continue, with intensive engagement with particular user groups for which uptake of the innovations remains a challenge.

Programme structure

Maintain the programme structure while leaving *some* room for innovation and exploration of areas that do not fall within any specific programme. Limit the portfolio within programmes to avoid fragmentation of effort.

ECDPM's next strategy

- Base the choice of topics on a periodic and systematic analysis of the environment and agenda of international cooperation, as well as on consultations with ECDPM's external counterparts. These consultations should substantially involve the European countries that fund ECDPM's work, but should not be limited to them to avoid a work agenda that is overly biased towards the agendas of EU member states. The Theory of Change would then identify where ECDPM intervention might have traction.

- When identifying potential topics, key criteria to be applied should include their salience for Europe-Africa relations, significant demand for engagement from multiple stakeholder groups, strong ECDPM contacts with relevant policy actors, the availability of funding to support new initiatives, and their openness to knowledge brokerage and the facilitation of multi-stakeholder policy processes. On the basis of an initial scan, topics of interest to ECDPM stakeholders might include aspects of regional economic transformation; migration; peace and security co-operation on a regional rather than country-by-county basis; the role of Europe-based MNCs; and the empowerment of women as a lynchpin of progress.

Annex 1: Interviewees

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Abebe Bekele, Essete	British Council, Ethiopia	Programme Officer former Young International Professional SEEA programme, ECDPM	F	Questionnaire	03.12.2015
Adriaen, Charlotte	EC Governance Unit, formerly in Madagascar	Head of Sector	F	Phone conversation	30.11.2015
Aggad, Faten	ECDPM	Head of Programme, ACD	F	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015
Amar, Zakaria	ECDPM	Programme Associate, (Mauritania)	M	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015
Assogbavi, Désiré	Oxfam International Liaison Office with the AU	Head of Office	M	Skype conversation	01.12.2015
Backes, Claudia	ECDPM	Information Officer, Publications – COMM	F	Face to face group conversation	20.10.2015
Banim, Guy	EU Institute for Security Studies	Research Associate and former Head of EEAS Mediation Support Unit	M	Face to face conversation	26.11.2015
Barker, Emily	ECDPM	Junior Communication Officer, COMM	F	Face to face group conversation	19.10.2015
Barrett, Mary	Deputy Director General for Development Cooperation, Ireland	Assistant Principle of Multilateral EU Policy Section	F	Phone conversation	08.01.2016

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Bayne, Sarah	Sarah Bayne consulting	Former evaluator ECDPM	F	Phone conversation	29.10.2015
Bieckmann, Frans	The Broker, the Netherlands	Editor-in-Chief	M	Phone conversation	24.11.2015
Bilal, San	ECDPM	Head of Programme, ET	M	Video conversation	17.10.2015
Bizzotto Molina, Paulina	ECDPM	Junior Policy Officer, FOOD Programme	F	Face to face 3-person group discussion	19.10.2015
Bossuyt, Jean	ECDPM	Director of Strategy	M	Face to face, Skype and phone	Various
Busia, Kojo, Dr.	Africa Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), UNECA	Acting Coordinator	M	Questionnaire	07.12.2015
Bwalya, Martin	NEPAD Agency	Head of Programme Development Division (includes CAADP)	M	Face to face conversation	27.11.2015
Byiers, Bruce	ECDPM	Senior Policy Officer, ET	M	Face-to-face conversation	16.10.2015
Cichocka, Anna	EEAS, Madagascar	Chef des opérations Gouvernance, Economie, Commerce et Secteurs sociaux	F	Email questionnaire	08.12.2015
Cilliers, Jakkie, Dr.	Institute for Strategic Studies-Africa (ISS-Africa)	Chair	M	Face to face conversation	02.11.2015
Corbalan, Sergi	Fair Trade Advocacy Office, Brussels	Director	M	Face-to-face conversation (brief)	20.10.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Darmuzey, Philippe	EC (retired)	Former Head of the Pan African Unit of the European Commission	M	Face to face conversation	20.10.2015
De Roquefeuil, Quentin	ECDPM	Ex-employee ET/FOOD team now with SAANA consulting	M	Phone conversation	18.11.2015
De Weijer, Frauke	ECDPM	Programme Associate, former Senior Policy Officer SECURE	F	Phone conversation	16.10.2015
Dellicour, Dominique	EEAS (retired)	Ex head of EU delegation to Senegal; ex-head of governance unit in AIDCO	F	Face to face conversation	18.11.2015
Denekere, Matthias	ECDPM	Research Associate, SECURE	M	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015
Desmidt, Sophie	ECDPM	Research Associate, SECURE	F	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015
Dias, Jacquie	ECDPM	Information Officer Dissemination & Support, COMM	F	Face to face group conversation	20.10.2015
Dohlman, Ebba, Dr.	OECD	SGE, PCD	F	Phone conversation	05.02.2015
Duband, Agnes	EEAS, Madagascar		F	Email question-naire	08.12.2015
El Fassi, Sahra	ECDPM	Junior Policy Officer, ACD	F	Questionnaire	26.10.2015
Engel, Paul	ECDPM	Senior Fellow and ex-Director	M	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Faria, Fernanda	ECDPM	Programme Associate	F	Face to face conversation	19.11.2015
Galeazzi, Greta	ECDPM	Junior Programme Officer, SEEA	F	Face to face conversation	18.10.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Gerard, Nicolas	EU Delegation, Zambia	Programme Officer, Trade & CAADP, European Commission	M	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015
Gielen, Karen	ECDPM	Corporate Officer Human Resources	F	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Gomes, Patrick I., Dr.	ACP Secretariat	Secretary-General and former Chair of ECDPM Board, former Ambassador of Guyana to the EU	M	Face to face conversation	11.01.2016
Gouwenberg, Anna	Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law the Netherlands	Head of Office	F	Face to face conversation	24.11.2015
Große-Puppendahl, Sebastian	ECDPM	Policy Officer, ET	M	Face-to-face group conversation	19.10.2015
Hauck, Volker	ECDPM	Programme Head, SECURE	M	Face to face conversations	16.10.2015 11.12.2015 30.12.2015
Helly, Damien	ECDPM	Deputy Head of Programme, SEEA	M	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Herrero Cangas, Alisa	ECDPM	Policy Officer, SEEA	F	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Hettinga, Henrietta	ECDPM	Senior Advisor Management and Organisation	F	Face to face conversation	20.10.2015
Hirsch, Alan, Professor	ECDPM	Trustee / University of Cape Town	M	Face to face conversation	15.10.2015
Hoefsloot, Klaus	ECDPM	Senior Corporate ICTs Officer – CORP-SERV	M	Face to face group conversation	19.10.2015
Hofman, Maaike	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands	Coordinator Free Trade Agreements / Policy Coordinator CSR and Trade	F	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Ionete, Denisa-Elena	EU Delegation to Chad	Head of Delegation and former Head of the Crisis Management and Fragility Unit at DEVCO	F	Phone conversation	26.11.2015
Jeffreson, Seamus	CONCORD	Director	M	Phone conversation	22.12.2015
Jenny, Joelle	EEAS	Director, Security Policy and Conflict Prevention, former Head of the (EEAS K2) Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division	F	Questionnaire	20.12.2013
Jinga, Bianca	DFID/Conflict, Humanitarian, Security and Emergencies Department (CHASE)	Governance Policy Advisor	F	Phone conversation	09.11.2015
Julian, Melissa	ECDPM	Manager, COMM	F	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015 28.10.2015 15.12.2015
Kanyarigika, Samuel, Dr.	COMESA	Coordinator, CAADP	M	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015
Karaki, Karim	ECDPM	Policy Officer, ET	M	Face-to-face group conversation	19.10.2015
Karingi, Stephen, Dr.	UNECA	Director, Regional Integration & Trade Division	M	Questionnaire	09.12.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Kelly, Laura	DFID	Head of Private Sector Department	F	Face-to-face conversation	04.11.2015
Knaepen, Hanne	ECDPM	Junior Policy Officer, FOOD Programme	F	Face to face 3-person group discussion and Skype conversation	19.10.2015 and 09.11.2015
Knoll, Anna	ECDPM	Programme Officer, SEEA, PCD	F	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Köb, Eleonora	ECDPM	Ex-employee, ex official in Operations Section – EU Delegation in Liberia	F	Skype conversation	18.11.2015
Koch, Florian, Dr.	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	Coordinator, Office to the African Union	M	Face to face conversation	04.12.2015
Kotsopoulos, John, Dr.	Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation, University of Pretoria, South Africa	Research Fellow	M	Face to face conversation	26.11.2015
Kouassi, Réné, Dr.	African Union Commission	Director, Economic & Social Affairs	M	Face to face conversation	04.12.2015
Kulis, Ivan	ECDPM	KM Officer ICTs for Dev – CORP-SERV	M	Face to face group conversation	19.10.2015
Lagerlöf, Helena	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden	Deputy Director, Section for Coordination of EU Development Policy, EU Department	F	Phone conversation	04.01.2016
Laporte, Geert	ECDPM	Deputy Director	M	Face-to-face conversation	16.10.2015
Lemmens, Roland	ECDPM	Head of Finance and Operations	M	Several face to face conversations	Various

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Lopes, Paula	Camões Instituto da Cooperação e da Lingua Portugal	Chefe da Divisão	F	Phone conversation	08.01.2016
Mackie, James	ECDPM	Senior Advisor and Head, LQS Unit	M	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Mair, Anton	Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, Austria	Deputy Director General for Development Cooperation	M	Phone conversation	08.01.2016
Maxwell, Simon	Overseas Development Institute	Senior Research Associate, former Director, President of European Think Tanks Group (ETTG)	M	Phone conversation	03.11.2015
McMullan, Brendan	DFID	Trade Policy Dept	M	Face-to-face conversation	04.11.2015
Medinilla Aldana, Alfonso	ECDPM	Junior Policy Officer, ACD	M	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015
Meebelo, Nalishebo, Dr.	African Union Commission	Senior Coordinator, Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture	F	Face to face conversation	03.12.2015
Mukundi, George W, Dr.	African Union Commission	Head, African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat, Political Affairs Department	M	Skype conversation	02.12.2015
Muller, Mike	University of the Witwatersrand	Emeritus Professor and former National Planning Commissioner	M	Face to face conversation	23.12.2015
Nkosi, Mxolisi	South African Embassy, Brussels	Ambassador	M	Phone conversation	03.12.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Nwajiaku, Kathryn, Dr.	OECD, DCD/GPP	Head of Secretariat, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding,	F	Phone conversation	07.12.2015
Okuthe-Oyugi, Frank, Dr.	Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights & Civic Education (LMRC)	Executive Director	M	Face to face group conversation	24.11.2015
Parada-Tur, Tanit	ECDPM	Communication Assistant, COMM	F	Face to face group conversation	19.10.2015
Parshotam, Asmita	ECDPM	Research Assistant / Young International Professional Programme, SEEA programme	F	Face to face conversation	18.10.2015
Ramdoo, Isabelle	ECDPM	Deputy Head of Programme, ET programme	F	Face-to-face conversation	19.10.2015
Rampa, Francesco	ECDPM	Head of FOOD Programme	M	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015
Renner, Sven	BGR (German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources)	Head of the Extractives and Development Program	M	Phone conversation	27.11.2015
Richelle, Koos	ECDPM	Board member, former Director-General of DEVCO and Director-General International Cooperation, the Netherlands	M	Breakfast conversation	16.10.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Rinkineva, Hanna	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland	Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy	F	Skype conversation	27.01.2016
Rudisch-hauser, Klaus	DG DEVCO, European Commission	Deputy Director General	M	Phone conversation	04.12.2015
Schippers, Marjan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands	Deputy Director International Trade Policy and Economic Governance	F	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015
Schulting, Gerard	The Netherlands Permanent Representation to the EU	COAFR/ACP Delegate	M	Face to face conversation	20.10.2015
Sebahara, Pamphile, Dr.	Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights & Civic Education (LMRC), Zambia	Head of Research, Training & Documentation	M	Face to face conversation and face to face group conversation	24.11.2015
Sherriff, Andrew	ECDPM	Head of Programme, SEEA	M	Face to face conversation	16.10.2015, 06.12.2015, 10.12.2015
Situmbeko, Hope	COMESA	Coordinator, ComAid (Aid for Trade) & Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM)	F	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015
Smith, Anthony	Westminster Foundation for Democracy	Director, former Director of International Relations, DFID	M	Phone conversation	29.10.2015
Sooklal, Anil, Ambassador	South African Government	Deputy Director-General, Asia & Middle East, Department of International Relations & Cooperation	M	Face to face conversation	26.11.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Spierings, Eunike	ECDPM	M&E Officer and primary contact person for this evaluation	F	Face to face, Skype and phone	Various
Stålgren, Patrik	Swedish Embassy in Nairobi	First Secretary, Deputy Head of Section, Senior Programme Manager	M	Face to face interview	18.11.2015
Sunga, Ishmael	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU)	CEO	M	Skype conversation	02.12.2015
Te Velde, Dirk Willem	ODI	Head of Programme, International Economics	M	Face-to-face conversation	04.11.2015
Thijssen, Nina	ECDPM	Communication Officer, KMC	F	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Tondel, Fabien	ECDPM	Policy Officer, FOOD Programme	M	Face to face 2-person group discussion	16.10.2015
Torres, Carmen	ECDPM	Junior Policy Officer, FOOD Programme	F	Face to face 3-person group discussion	19.10.2015
Ulmer, Karen	ACT Alliance, Brussels	Senior Policy Officer, Trade	F	Face-to-face conversation	25.11.2015
Van 't Hoff, Yaseena	ECDPM	Information Officer, Publications, COMM	F	Face to face group conversation	19.10.2015
Van Bellinghen, Marc	EEAS	Pan African Division (responsible for future of Cotonou in EEAS), ex Deputy Head of Conflict Prevention Division – EEAS	M	Face to face conversation	19.11.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Van Bruggen, Frits, Dr.	Netherlands Embassy, Ethiopia	1st Secretary Multilateral & Regional Affairs	M	Face to face group conversation	04.12.2015
Van Dijk, Robert	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands	Team Leader, EU Development Cooperation	M	Face to face conversation	24.11.2015
Van Houwelingen, Heino	EEAS	Senior Advisor, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division	M	Face to face conversation	19.11.2015
Van Hove, Kathleen	ECDPM	Senior Policy Officer, ET programme and International Relations and Partnerships	F	Face-to-face conversation	16.10.2015
Van Laar, Jacques	ECDPM	Dissemination and Information Support Officer, KMC	M	Face to face group conversation	20.10.2015
Van Seters, Jeske	ECDPM	Deputy Programme Manager, FOOD Programme	F	Face to face conversation	19.10.2015
Vanheukelom, Jan	ECDPM	Senior Advisor, PEA & Governance	M	Face-to-face conversation	17.10.2015
Verdir, Aleš	Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the European Union	Counsellor	M	Skype conversation	04.01.2016
Verheul, Jeroen	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands	Special Envoy of the Co-Chair of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation	M	Skype conversation	14.11.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Vernooij, Marcel	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands	Member of the Management Team of the Sustainable Economic Development Department, and Strategic Policy Advisor	M	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015
Vetter, Wolfram	EEAS	Acting Head, Development Cooperation Coordination Division (DCCD)	M	Face to face conversation	20.10.2015
Vleugels, Birgit	EU Delegation to Ethiopia	Governance Adviser	F	Face to face conversation	03.12.2015
Voorbraak, Doris	Netherlands Embassy, Ethiopia	Deputy Permanent Representative to the African Union	F	Face to face group conversation	18.11.2015
Wane, El-Ghassim	African Union Commission	Director of Peace & Security	M	Face to face conversation	04.12.2015
Wasilewska, Malgorzata	EEAS	Head of Division, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments	F	Face to face conversation	19.11.2015
Wermuth, Ewald	ECDPM	Director	M	Face to face conversation	Various
Williams, Paul	DFID	Deputy Head of Europe Department	M	Phone conversation	008.12.2015
Williams, Rhys	ECDPM	Junior Communication Officer, COMM	M	Face to face group conversation	19.10.2015
Wohlgemuth, Lennart	ECDPM	Vice Chair / Acting Chair Trustee	M	Face to face conversation	15.10.2015
Woolfrey, Sean	ECDPM	Policy Officer, FOOD Programme	M	Face to face 2-person group discussion	16.10.2015

Name (last, first, title)	Organisation	Role	M/F	Type of contact	Date(s) of contact
Woollard, Catherine	EPLO	Former Executive Director European Peacebuilding Liaison Office	F	Face to face conversation	18.11.2015
Wormgoor, Ronald	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands	Strategic Policy Advisor	M	Face to face conversation	23.11.2015

Annex 2: References and sample of reading

ACP Secretariat, *A User's Guide for Non-State Actors*, 2003 (compiled by ECDPM)

Africa Confidential*, Rules of Commercial Engagement*, 21 Nov 2014

Bilal, S., *EPA Briefing Note 62*, April 2014

Bolaji-Adio, A., "The Challenge of Measuring SDG 16: what role for African regional frameworks?", *ECDPM Discussion Paper 175*, May 2015

Bossuyt, J., "*ECDPM as a "honest broker"; what does it mean and how do we proceed?"*, October 2011

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DFID, *Business Case and Intervention Summary*, undated

DFID, *Enhancing the effectiveness and value for money of European external cooperation for development results; annual review*, April 2015

DFID, *Project Completion Review ECDPM,* December 2013

EC, *Council Conclusions on a EU response to situations of fragility, of the 2831st External Relations Council meeting in Brussels*, Brussels, 19-20 November 2007.ECDPM, *ACD internal assessment, 2012-2015*, April 2015

ECDPM and IDLGroup, *ECDPM Dossier "PERIA" Political economy analyses of the AU and regional economic communities in Africa,* July 2014-December 2015

ECDPM blog Talking Points, *'States of Fragility' report: Some discomfort around the indicators,* 5 June 2015.

ECDPM blog Talking Points, *Taking fragility seriously in financing SDGs,* 6 May 2015

ECDPM blog Talking Points, *Why do we need a revised model for assessing fragility and what would it need to look like?* 16 October 2015

ECDPM blog, *EPA Negotiations: The honeymoon is over…,* 14 October 2011

ECDPM Forum input, "La *politique de sécurité européenne à la hauteur des défis du futur? Jalons pour les 20 prochaines années",* November 2015

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ECDPM Seminar for African Diplomats – Recent Development In the EU Policy Environment: Implications for Africa, including: "EU-Africa Trade, EPAs & Private Sector Development"; "Concept Note and Agenda"; "Recent Developments in the EU Policy Environment – Implications for Africa – Welcome and Introduction"; "EU Joint Programming – The future of EU aid effectiveness, or another stuck venture?"; "An Update on the EU External Action in the Sahel and the European Neighbourhood"; "Implementing the Agenda for Change across the 11th EDF (national) programming – Findings from an Independent Study"; "ACP-EU"; "EU Migration Policy – the Valletta Summit and Beyond", 19 November 2015

ECDPM, "A closer look into EU's external action frontline – Framing the challenges ahead for EU delegations", *ECDPM Briefing Note No. 62*, March 2014

ECDPM, "A five lenses framework for analysing the political economy in regional integration"*, ECDPM Discussion Paper 178*, 2015

ECDPM, "Capacity Development in Fragile States", *ECDPM Discussion Paper 58D*, May 2007

ECDPM, "Regional dynamics in Africa: High stakes for development"*, ECDPM Discussion Paper 174*, 2015

ECDPM, *"Study on the uptake of learning from EuropeAid's strategic evaluations into development policy and practice"*, June 2014

ECDPM, "Universality and differentiation in the post 2015 development agenda", *ECDPM Discussion Paper 173*, 2015

ECDPM, *Annual Report 2014*, undated

ECDPM, *ECDPM Internal Assessment: How did ECDPM implement the 2012-2016 Strategy? Final Summary Report*, September 2015

ECDPM, *ECDPM Note in relation to policy support to Belgium (DGD)*, September 2015

ECDPM, *ECDPM Strategy 2012-2016: extended results framework*, January 2013

ECDPM, *Economic Transformation & Trade Internal Assessment, 2012-2015*, August 2015

ECDPM, *EPAs – Frequently Asked Questions*, October 2014

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ECDPM, *Financial Report 2014*

ECDPM, *Food Security Internal Assessment, 2012-2015*, September 2015

ECDPM, GREAT Insights Volume 2, Issue 6: *The role of the AU and Africa-EU Partnership in dealing with the peace and security situation in Africa,* September 2013

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ECDPM, *International Relations & Partnerships Internal Assessment, 2012-2015*, September 2015

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ECDPM, *Mid-Term Review of the 2012-2016 ECDPM Strategy*, October 2014

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the effectiveness and value for money of European external cooperation for development results (2014, 2015).

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Annex 3: Methodology

This evaluation consisted of document reviews, interviews and a little bit of 'seeing ECDPM in action' in the form of attending part of a single ECDPM event. The evaluation has been conducted by a team of four evaluators: Willem van Eekelen (team leader), Peter da Costa (deputy team leader), Francesca Cook and Paul Spray. This team was composed in close consultation with ECDPM, to ensure good coverage of the Centre's key policy areas.

Methodological challenges and choices

For three reasons, ECDPM's outcomes are hard to assess.

First, **ECDPM does not *cause* but *contributes to* certain policy outcomes.** Moreover, these policy outcomes often take shape in environments that are complex, unpredictable, and highly politicized. There are at least two ways of evaluating such contributions. First, we could have used an 'outcome mapping' approach. The result would be a confirmation (or not) of logical links between interventions and outcomes in complex environments, without assuming causality between ECDPM's work and actual policy progress. This did not seem satisfactory. Second, we would have liked to use a form of 'contribution analysis', in which we compare real-life developments against ECDPM's Theory of Change and against 'rival explanations'.[37] However, this turned out to be impossible because:

- ECDPM has not *had* an explicit Theory of Change;
- ECDPM has not documented tipping and turning points in real time;
- There are no explicit benchmarks against which to assess progress; and
- There were no explicit rival explanations to assess.

Second, **some of ECDPM's contributions are deliberately invisible.** Sometimes ECDPM's work in highly politicised situations requires the Centre to remain 'behind the curtain'. At other times it is because the recipients of ECDPM's services make the results their own, without formally acknowledging ECDPM's role. We have come across several examples of work that ECDPM had identifiably contributed to, without being able to say so publically.

Third, **ECDPM is careful not to be overly demanding in the feedback it seeks from its partners.** This is appropriate: policy-makers who welcome support may not always be eager to reciprocate with feedback, or even to acknowledge the support.

Considering the circumstances, and more often than not, the best we could do was to compare stories and assess the extent to which the accounts of ECDPM and its external counterparts were broadly aligned.

This means that this evaluation is subject to the risk of bias because interviewees might amplify ECDPM's role, simply because the conversation takes place in the context of an ECDPM evaluation. If ICTSD evaluators had spoken with the same EPA stakeholders, for example, chances are that the emphasis would be have been on ICTSD's contribution, rather than on ECDPM's contribution. We would have reduced this bias by conducting external

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[37] The requirements and dynamics of Contribution Analysis are described in a range of papers, and nowhere clearer than in the first paper of a special issue of *Evaluation*: Mayne, J, "Contribution analysis: Coming of age?" *Evaluation* (Sage), July 2012.

interviews without mentioning ECDPM (as in: 'could you tell us about the EPA process, and about the parties that played a role in this process?'), but this would have been difficult in practice (i.e. it is difficult to arrange an interview without clarifying the purpose of the interview) and would not have been in line with standard ethical research guidelines, which typically stipulate that the interviewee must be made aware of the purpose of the interview.

In principle, we could have reduced this risk by developing and assessing rival explanations (i.e. result X might also have been caused by action Y). In practice, the time frame and budget of this evaluation did not allow for this.

The implication of these various challenges and choices is that we have only been able to arrive at a sense of ECDPM's contribution to its desired outcomes, as opposed to arriving at incontrovertible proof of its impact on outcomes.

Stages and methods

The stages of this evaluation overlapped and were as follows:

1. A review of documentation. We started with the core documents, and the various internal assessments featured prominently. These internal assessments proved to be of very high quality indeed, and they gave us the initial insights required to plan this evaluation.

2. In consultation with ECDPM, we sampled policy processes (i.e. work streams) on the basis of the following principles:

   • For each programme and on the basis of ECDPM's own internal assessments, we selected one relatively strong – and one relatively new or weak-performing policy process.
   • For one of the larger programmes – Economic Transformation and Trade – we selected a third policy process on the basis of strong inter-programme linkages.
   • We also selected a relatively strong – and relatively weak-performing part of ECDPM's Knowledge Management and (separately) Communication work.

   The samples were as follows:

Programme	Sample
African Change Dynamics (ACD)	Supporting the consolidation, and translation into practice, of the African Governance Architecture
ACD	Sub-process on linking "demand and supply" for reform in North Africa
Economic Transformation and Trade (ET&T)	Trade and Economic Partnership Agreements
ET&T	Extractive industry
ET&T	Regional economic integration
Food Security	Implementation of CAADP at the continental level
Food Security	Sub-processes in Europe, Africa and at the multilateral level, focusing on the role of the private sector in relation to food and nutrition security
SECURE	Support to G7+ and New Deal processes
SECURE	Strengthening African regional responses to conflict, conflict

Programme	Sample
	prevention, peacebuilding and state-building
Strengthening European External Action (SEEA)	EU-ACP and the Future of the Cotonou Partnerships Agreement
SEEA	Europe and the Global Development Agenda post 2015
Communications	Use of digital technologies (particularly in the work stream on 'EU-Africa relations')
Communications	Monitoring and Evaluation
Knowledge Management	Internal knowledge processes and platforms
Knowledge Management	Internal learning agenda, knowledge sharing, facilitating Communities of Practice, and networking

The use of samples means that we have seen some parts of ECDPM's work in more detail than other parts. In some areas (e.g. capacity building) our analysis is very robust even if our samples did not cover much capacity building work, partly because of the many interviews in which we discussed the issue and partly because of our combined expertise in this particular field. In other areas (e.g. private sector engagement) we felt less certain about our findings. In all cases where we felt that the issue of sample validity might have biased our analysis, we have stated that our observations are 'tentative' or 'based on limited evidence'.

3. The team met in Maastricht and, after a day of stock-taking and planning, identified additional documentation and conducted a series of one-to-one and focus group discussions with staff and trustees. This generated a picture of organisational systems and dynamics (i.e. the ToR's 5th question). It also equipped us with the insights needed to engage with partners and other external stakeholders.

4. We then conducted a series of conversations with external stakeholders – either face to face or via telephonic or electronic means. These conversations enabled us to triangulate impressions and deepen our understanding of ECDPM's work and results. We interviewed most stakeholders on the basis of a list that ECDPM provided us with. In addition and through snowballing (i.e. person X suggesting we talk with person Y) we added stakeholders who had not been on ECDPM's list. Because ECDPM emphasised the importance of these conversations, and because of the limited number of days available for this evaluation, there was relatively little time left for a thorough *direct* quality assessment of ECDPM's products and services. The implication is that parts of our analysis – about ECDPM's knowledge products, for example – is based on *quality perceptions* amongst external stakeholders rather than our own *quality assessments*.

5. All team members fed the evidence they gathered in the course of these document reviews and interviews into a cloud-based 'evidence log'. This log categorised each piece of evidence in one or a few of some 70 categories (e.g. 'Theory of Change', 'Brokerage', 'Views on ECDPM's future'). The value of this 700+ page log was that:

   • No evidence got lost. If we had it, we could find and present it.
   • All evidence was duly categorised. In the initial stages, this facilitated the identification of evidence deficits and evidence saturation, which enabled us to make choices about the remaining work. In the later stages, this categorisation greatly facilitated our internal process of analysis (as in: 'these five pages of text contain *all* the evidence we have in relation to issue X').

- In the event that ECDPM or the Reference Group felt unconvinced about any part of the analysis, we could make the underpinning evidence available (duly anonymized).

On the basis of the evidence log, the team came together for three days of joint analysis.

6. Once we had conducted the analysis, the team leader presented the findings to the ECDPM Management Team. The team leader then drafted the report. After a few intensive rounds of feedback from the evaluation team and the Director of Agulhas, we submitted a team-owned draft report to ECDPM. Constructive feedback of this evaluation's Reference Group and ECDPM's Board and staff enabled the team to collectively rework this draft report into the version you are now reading. This version has lost the first draft's 350 endnotes, which provided evidence and representative quotes that underpinned our analysis and, as such, provided some quality assurance. For this same purpose of quality assurance, these endnotes remain available upon request, subject to ECDPM consent, from willem@agulhas.co.uk. Note that we have retained a handful of footnotes in this latest version.

Annex 4: Terms of Reference for this evaluation

General evaluation objective

Since 1986, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) has established itself as an independent foundation specialised in EU external relations with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Every five years, the work of the Centre is submitted to an external evaluation. The Board expects the present evaluation to critically review the context and performance of the Centre during the period 2012-2015; to assess how the Centre is evolving as a knowledge institution; and to contribute ideas to the development of a new strategy for the period 2017-2021. Like its predecessors, the evaluation is of a strategic and institutional nature, focusing on the Centre *"as a whole"*. The evaluation serves both learning and accountability purposes.

ECDPM Mission

The mission of the Centre as an independent foundation is to help building effective partnerships for development between public and private actors in the European Union and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Centre's strategic objectives are:

- To strengthen the institutional capacity of public and private actors in the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to manage development policy and international cooperation and,
- To improve cooperation between development partners in Europe and the South.

The ECDPM regards *'development policy management'*[38] and the broader concept of EU external action (on which we explicitly focus our work since 2012) as processes owned and managed by their respective stakeholders. As a *'think and do tank'* it sees its role primarily as a facilitator of such processes. The Centre is aware that quality outcomes depend upon the willingness and capacity of the stakeholders to interact purposefully and effectively. Accordingly, it facilitates interactions between stakeholders to design, negotiate, implement and/or evaluate development policies and international cooperation programmes and seeks to contribute to their capacity to participate and interact effectively. The ECDPM is also a *'knowledge broker'*, supporting the mobilisation, sharing and use of relevant knowledge and information on key issues among practitioners, policy-makers and specialists.

Successive institutional evaluations (in 2006 and 2011) have confirmed the unique niche and added value of ECDPM as (i) an initiator and animator of major strategic discussions; (ii) a sounding board for key institutions and actors from Europe and the countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific; (iii) a knowledge broker, (iv) a facilitator of complex policy processes; (v) and an advisor on issues of institutional development, particularly for actors in the South.

The following are key elements that distinguish our approach:

- Diversity of roles (we act alternately as researcher, knowledge broker, facilitator and policy advisor, including on institutional change processes).

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[38] *Development policy management* refers to the design, negotiation, programming, implementation and evaluation of development policies and international cooperation.

- Engagement as an 'honest broker' (we maintain operational autonomy, a non-partisan approach, respect for diversity and creativity, open communication and full transparency of roles).
- Interventions focused on following closely strategic policy processes.
- Linking of policy and practice –which includes trying to reduce the implementation gap between stated policy ambitions and actual practices.
- Effective combination of capacity strategies (we facilitate initiatives, generate knowledge, maintain functional partnerships and provide demand-driven support for institutional development).
- Long-term perspective on change processes.

Following this methodology, we seek to provide a selection of public goods and services to policymakers and practitioners:

- Prospective strategic analyses that frame the challenges associated with the renewal of international cooperation so that these can be adequately addressed ('framing').
- Policy analysis with stakeholders to identify viable scenarios for reform.
- Strategies and methods for building bridges between development cooperation and other (external and internal) policy domains.
- Pragmatic operational knowledge about how the new policy agendas can be implemented in practice.
- Adapted frameworks and methods for conducting inclusive policy dialogue seeking common values and interests (with a focus on negotiated agreements).
- Management of institutional innovation to enable actors from both the South and Europe to participate effectively in the expanded global development agenda.

Strategic choices and focus

ECDPM plans its work according to a five-year strategy that sets out its key strategic choices, building on the Centre's past experiences as an independent foundation.

The 2012-2016 Strategy was elaborated following an intensive process of dialogue internally, with the Board and external stakeholders. While the strategic document reflects continuity in the way we operate, it was also felt that the changing global environment for development cooperation required a number of important innovations. These include:

- *A clarification of the overall narrative underpinning our work*. In 2011 the Centre felt it could not align its strategy to the then prevailing *'MDG paradigm'*. Based on a thorough context analysis, it led the Centre to put forward four major themes that are at the heart of the major transitions affecting international cooperation. They represent 'meta-goals' to guide our action, i.e. areas in which ECDPM can add value as an independent broker and facilitator at the interface between policy and practice. Through our activities we thus seek to have a positive influence on the following change processes: (i) reconciling values and interests in EU external action; (ii) promoting economic governance and trade for inclusive growth; (iii) supporting societal dynamics of change in developing countries and (iv) addressing food security as global public good.

- *The expansion of our programmes*. In order to push forward the above priority agendas, the Centre's programme structure was revised. Since 1994, *programmes* function as key delivery instruments of our strategic choices. They facilitate the planning and

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implementation of our mandate as well as the coherent use of staff and budgets. In 2011 it was decided to transform two existing programmes and add three new programmes (reflecting the broader narrative of the Strategy 2012-2016). The five core programmes of the Centre deal respectively with (i) EU external action; (ii) economic transformation; (iii) conflict and security; (iv) Africa change dynamics and (v) agriculture and food security. In order to create space for exploring new topics or investing in cross-cutting issues, it was agreed that the Centre could also develop project activities *outside* the programmes (a case in point is the Centre's ongoing work on decentralisation and local development).

- *Embracing a more political approach to brokerage.* Another innovation was to promote a stronger culture of thinking and acting politically in our work as independent process facilitator and honest broker. The aim was to better equip the Centre to deal with the political dimension of change processes with a view to enhance its overall relevance and impact. Programmes would be encouraged to refine the theory of change underlying their work in core policy processes.

- *Strengthening primary processes for delivery.* Again with a view to increase outreach, relevance and impact, the 2012-2016 Strategy set the target to improve our Communication/Knowledge Management systems, our approach to strategic partnerships as well as our capacity to raise smart funding (allowing the Centre to function as an independent institution working on long-term change processes).

Expected outcomes

ECDPM is a small, independent operator at the complex interface between the European Union and its Member States and the countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. As a facilitator and knowledge broker, the Centre's activities are embedded in multi-stakeholder policy processes in which the stakeholders call the tune and ECDPM plays a supportive role. Given the above, we have defined a set of realistic outcomes that we strive to achieve in our various policy processes, programmes and projects:

- More inclusive and better-informed policy dialogues on global development challenges between actors from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.
- More effective participation of public and private actors from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in key policy processes that affect their cooperation
- Reduction of the 'implementation gap' between policy and practice in key areas that affect the EU's cooperation with Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific in addressing global development challenges
- More integrated and coherent EU external action that reconciles its values and interests and takes account of the impact of its internal and external policies on developing countries in order to level the 'playing field' for sustainable global development
- Strengthened partnerships between the EU, its member states and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific for equitable and sustainable governance of global development challenges.

Specific evaluation objectives

It is proposed to focus the review on five main evaluation questions:

1) How *pertinent* were the strategic choices made by the Centre in its 2012-2016 Strategy considering the evolving EU / international agenda / environment for cooperation?

   - How appropriate were the strategic choices made by the various programmes, all Centre initiatives and projects in terms of identifying relevant policy processes, targeting institutions/actors and developing a coherent set of activities to achieve outcomes?
   - To what extent has the Centre demonstrated a capacity to integrate new policy issues or challenges that arose during the implementation period of the Strategy 2012-2016?

2) How effective was the *implementation* of the Strategy across policy processes, programmes and projects, particularly with regard to the *main innovations* introduced in 2012?

   - To what extent and how ECDPM did manage to find a relevant 'niche' and be considered as a credible actor in the various policy processes in which it engaged[39]?
   - Which envisaged innovations did not work out as expected (in terms of strategic positioning, relevance, recognition as key player or added value) and why?

3) How effective was the Centre in acting as an *honest broker/political facilitator* of multi-actor policy processes?

   - How effective were the various programmes, all-Centre initiatives and projects in playing/combining the specific ECDPM roles (i.e. process facilitator, honest broker) that are crucial for producing added value and impact?
   - To what extent and how has ECDPM been able to implement its stated ambition to think and act more politically across the board? What worked well and why? What worked less well and why?
   - What lessons can be drawn from the collective experience of ECDPM as a process facilitator/honest broker? What conditions are crucial to make effectively display such roles? How important is core/institutional funding in this respect?

4) How successful was the Centre in achieving the various types of *outcomes* it has defined?

   - What outcomes did the various programmes, all-centre initiatives and projects achieve?
   - How relevant were the theories of change (explicitly or implicitly) used by ECDPM in the different policy processes in which it engaged?
   - What lessons can de drawn from the collective experience of ECDPM in pursuing its envisaged outcomes? What are the key enabling factors that allow us to achieve impact? What are key obstacles encountered in getting results? How adequate is our overall framework of outcomes?

5) How relevant and efficient were *specific organisational choices* -related to primary processes such as our programme structure, our knowledge management and

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[39] For this aspect it will be important to make a distinction between programmes that could build on past work (i.e. those dealing with EU external action or trade/economic cooperation) and those who were newly established in 2012 (security and conflict; Africa change dynamics and FOOD).

communication systems as well as the mechanisms for quality support and progress review - for attaining the Centre's strategic objectives[40]?

- How pertinent, effective and efficient is the current programme structure in terms of (i) delivering outputs and outcomes; (ii) ensuring focus and coherence across the board; (iii) promoting joint action when needed; and (iv) maximising the impact of the Centre *"as a whole"?* In dealing with this aspect, the evaluation team should also take into account that the growing amount of non-programme related work done by the Centre, either through all-Centre initiatives or through specific projects.
- How solid and effective are our systems for ensuring quality support and progress review?
- How did the planned innovations in the area of Communication and Knowledge Management work out? Has the new Communication approach helped to enhance outreach and impact? How well integrated are these functions in the overall ECDPM set-up?

Key results expected

Building on the Centre's mid-term review (2014), the internal assessment (2015) as well as existing management records regarding our activities and outcomes, the evaluation will make a global assessment of the pertinence, effectiveness, efficiency (in relation to the areas included under evaluation question 5) and impact of the Centre's work in particular from the point of view of its diverse stakeholder groups. The evaluation will highlight strong and weak points as well as relevant dilemmas the Centre faces.

The specific expected results are:

- An assessment of the overall relevance of the 2012-2016 Strategy taking into account the context for international/European cooperation in the period covered.
- An assessment of the way the Centre implemented its strategy (particularly its main innovations)
- An assessment of the effectiveness of the Centre's roles, approaches and tools as well as strategic partnerships in achieving our five outcomes.
- An assessment of the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the core primary processes identified above
- Specific recommendations on how to improve the Centre's pertinence, responsiveness and effectiveness within the framework of evolving EU relations with key partners (such as the ACP Group, the African Union, etc.) and shifts in (funding of) international cooperation.
- Specific recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of primary processes covered by this evaluation (i.e. programme structures, knowledge management and communication, quality support and progress review).

The evaluation team is expected to submit the following products:

- An Inception Note outlining the proposed approach and methodology for conducting the evaluation.
- A power point with *preliminary findings* to be presented to the Board in October 2015.

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[40] This fifth evaluation question will help to cover 'efficiency' issues in relation to the overall functioning of ECDPM.

- A draft and final report of the evaluation (December 2015-January 2016).

Methodology, management and timing

The evaluation is targeted at ECDPM as an institution. This requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond a performance assessment of each of the five core programmes. A key methodological challenge will be to ensure a feasible focus to the evaluation, taking the five above mentioned evaluation questions as a starting point. During the inception phase it will be important that the evaluation team identifies, on the basis of a number of criteria, a limited and representative set of policy processes (across the board) that they want to assess as well as key stakeholders from different walks of life to be interviewed[41]. Another methodological challenge will be to agree on adequate judgment criteria to evaluate the quality of complex roles performed by ECDPM (such as knowledge broker, process facilitation, political facilitation, etc.).

The external evaluation will be conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of 4 members, representing a mix of expertise to cover the various institutional, thematic and organisational aspects mentioned above.

To further ensure the quality of the evaluation process, a Reference Group will be formed. It will be composed by maximum 3 external experts/stakeholders. They will act a *sounding board* that can be consulted by the evaluation team at critical stages of the process (i.e. during the inception phase, when preparing the preliminary findings or the draft final report). The Centre is keen to involve the IOB in the Reference Group in a form to be further discussed.

To ensure full independence, the Board of ECDPM will be playing a key role in the evaluation process. To this end, the following steps are foreseen:

- the draft TOR for the evaluation will be commented upon by four Board members;
- the final version of the TOR will be approved by the Board (through its Chair);
- the Board Executive Committee will be involved in the selection of the evaluators;
- the Board will formally commission the work to the selected evaluators;
- the preliminary findings of the evaluation will be presented by the evaluation team to the Board during its October 2015 meeting[42];
- the Centre will send its comments on the preliminary findings to the evaluation team for possible consideration in elaborating the final report;
- by January 2016, the evaluation team will send the final report to the Board. From its side, the Centre's MT will send a management letter responding to the recommendations of the evaluation team.

A targeted tendering process for recruiting the Team Leader will be launched end of June 2015. It is expected that the full team (to be composed in consultation with ECDPM) can start in August and conclude its work by December 2015 - January 2016.

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[41] The relevance and effectiveness of ECDPM are likely to be assessed differently by our various partners and clients. So it will be key during the inception phase to identify a representative sample of core interviewees from our different stakeholder groups.

[42] By then, the Centre will also have prepared a *"zero draft"* of its new Strategy 2017-2021 that will be handed over to Board for consideration

Annex 5: Evaluation team

Willem van Eekelen, team leader
Willem specialises in institutional evaluations and organisational capacity strengthening. He built his experience in a wide range of UN agencies and NGOs before turning to consultancy work. Willem is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Birmingham, trustee for a changing portfolio of NGOs, and a Bloomsbury author. Willem holds highest honours MSc degrees in Development Programming and in Sociological Economics, from the Erasmus University Rotterdam and the University of Sussex.

Peter K.A. da Costa, Ph.D., deputy team leader
Peter has worked in and on Africa as well as on global issues and initiatives for more than two decades. His areas of expertise include Research Uptake; Communication for Social Change; and Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation. He consults with multilateral and bilateral development agencies as well as philanthropic foundations and independent monitoring organisations. Long-term clients include the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, with a focus on evidence-informed policy making (including on the Think Tank Initiative), as well as transparency, participation and accountability. He is also a Senior Adviser to the Africa Progress Panel, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He formerly served as a Senior Adviser in the Office of the Executive Secretary at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He holds a Ph.D. in Development Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Francesca Cook
Francesca has provided strategic development assistance advice to multi-lateral and bilateral aid agencies, foreign affairs departments and national governments in emerging market and fragile countries. She has worked at the policy and project levels. The last 10 years have primarily focused on strategic analysis, monitoring and evaluation. Areas of focus: governance (rule of law, regulatory reform, anti-corruption); private sector development; fragility, conflict prevention, security reform; and gender equality. Her skills include strategic framework recommendations; political economy analysis; fragility assessments; policy and systems development; evaluation, monitoring and peer review; project formulation. Francesca has managed numerous donor networks, chaired initiatives, committees and meetings, and organised and spoken at international conferences. She combines 11+ years as an OECD Manager and 2 years as a UNDP Senior Policy Advisor with 9 years as an independent development expert. Francesca has a multi-disciplinary education in public administration, political science, economics; business; and the environment. Francesca is bilingual English-French.

Paul Spray
Paul has worked extensively for governments and INGOs on development. He was a Senior Economic Adviser at DFID, and headed DFID's Central Research Department with a focus on funding research programmes closely linked to practice. He also headed DFID's offices for Nigeria, and for Latin America and the Caribbean. He was Director of Policy and Campaigns for the British INGO Christian Aid. More recently, at Traidcraft, he had practical experience of a trading company, campaigned on EPAs, and worked with the EU and UK governments, European supermarkets, developing country exporters, and small producers to improve supermarket purchasing practices. He has degrees in economics and in Development Studies.