



Council of the
European Union

064857/EU XXVI. GP
Eingelangt am 16/05/19

Brussels, 16 May 2019
(OR. en)

9130/19

DEVGEN 99
FIN 344
COAFR 93
ACP 53
RELEX 470
ASIM 59
JAI 492
COPS 149
MAMA 80
COWEB 67

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	16 May 2019
To:	Delegations

No. prev. doc.:	7437/19
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Subject:	European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 32/2018 on the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Flexible but lacking focus - Council conclusions (16 May 2019)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 32/2018 on the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Flexible but lacking focus, as adopted by the Council at its 3690th meeting held on 16 May 2019.

**Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 32/2018
on the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Flexible but lacking focus**

1. The Council welcomes the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 32/2018 on the "European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Flexible but lacking focus", which examines whether the EUTF for Africa was well designed and implemented, pointing to both strengths and weaknesses. EU trust funds are complementary, ad-hoc tools used for emergency, post-emergency or thematic actions. The Council stresses that trust funds should apply the full range of development effectiveness principles and should be coherent with long-term development priorities, national and EU country strategies and other relevant instruments and programmes.¹ In this context, the Council underlines the relevance of its previous conclusions² on the issue and recalls the policy framework on EU trust funds laid down in the new European Consensus on Development.
2. The Council recalls that the EUTF for Africa was launched at the Valletta Summit on Migration in 2015, where European and African Heads of State or Government agreed to work in a spirit of partnership and shared responsibility to find common solutions to challenges of mutual interest. It is the largest of four existing EU trust funds, pooling €4.2 billion from a variety of sources, including the European Development Fund (EDF), the EU budget as well as resources from EU Member States and other donors. The EUTF for Africa supports activities in 26 countries across three regions of Africa: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa. The objective is to foster stability and contribute to better migration management as well as to addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration, in particular by promoting resilience, economic and equal opportunities and security and development in Africa.

¹ 9459/17 of 19.05.2017

² 15569/17 of 11.12.2017

3. The Council recognises that the EUTF for Africa is a strategic and flexible implementing tool, which effectively addresses the different challenges of irregular migration and forced displacement across the three regions.

The EUTF for Africa has demonstrated its added value by facilitating political and policy dialogues with partner countries, coordination, producing concrete results, and pooling resources and expertise from the EU, its Member States and other donors.

The Council welcomes that the EUTF for Africa has allowed for a swift response to the complex crisis situations, each of different nature, in the three regions, with greater speed than traditional instruments. The Council also takes note of the report's conclusion that the EUTF for Africa has contributed to the effort of decreasing the number of irregular migrants passing from Africa to Europe, but that this contribution cannot yet be measured in a precise manner.

The Council stresses the need to further pursue the efforts aimed at mobilising additional financial resources for the EUTF for Africa, including from Member States, to sustain its achievements and address new emerging challenges within Africa, including along the Central Mediterranean and Western Mediterranean migration routes.

4. The Special Report provides valuable observations and recommendations to strengthen the management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the EUTF for Africa which could be useful, more broadly, for other EU trust funds.

While underlining the importance of maintaining a broad mandate, the Council takes note of all the report's conclusions and recommendations, including that the EUTF for Africa should be more focused and steer support towards specific actions likely to produce measurable results and have impact on the ground. The Council stresses the importance of the four recommendations of the Court, including the respective timeframes, and calls on the Commission to ensure proper follow-up.

Improve the quality of the objectives

5. The flexibility of the EUTF for Africa should not come at the expense of a focused strategy that delivers impact. The Council encourages the European Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to continue revising the strategic priorities and the regional operational frameworks, ensuring that they are more specific, focused and achievable. The Council appreciates the strong involvement of the Board to review strategic priorities in order to maximise the focus and impact of the EUTF for Africa. The Council also endorses the role of the Operational Committees to regularly update the regional operational frameworks, as the situation on the ground constantly evolves and to ensure that the strategic orientations are coherent and focused while ensuring the ownership of partner countries. The Council calls on the Commission to enhance its efforts to collect and share best practices as well as the to identify, use and share lessons-learned with all relevant stakeholders.

Revise the selection procedure for projects

6. The Council welcomes the Report's findings regarding project selection and stresses the importance of further improving the use of transparent, inclusive and clear procedures.

It stresses the need to ensure that the Board and the Operational Committees receive complete and timely information and documentation, to allow for well- prepared and informed decisions.

The Council also calls on the Commission to maximise complementarity with existing instruments, initiatives and programming processes, including the European External Investment Plan.

Take measures to speed up implementation

7. Furthermore, the Council calls on the Commission to explore ways to accelerate and strengthen planning and implementation, notably by using the Commission's guidelines on emergency situations to their full potential.

The Council also recognises the role that Member States, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and other donors play in the pace of implementation of the EUTF for Africa and calls on all actors to work better together.

Improve the monitoring of the EUTF for Africa

8. While recognising the efforts aimed at measuring the performance of the EUTF Africa more systemically, the Council calls on the Commission to fully operationalise the common monitoring and evaluation system. It also encourages the Commission to carry out an evaluation of the EUTF for Africa and to establish a specific risk assessment framework, in line with good practice in EU and UN trust fund management.

9. The Council welcomes the Commission's extensive response to the Court's recommendations and looks forward to the timely and effective implementation of the EUTF for Africa.

The Council encourages improved coordination and consultation in and with partner countries as well as with other relevant partners and initiatives.

The lessons learnt from the EUTF for Africa should be shared and effectively integrated, whenever relevant, into the Commission's management of EU trust funds, in order to optimise the use of this aid modality in EU development cooperation and external relations.
