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## JOINT Effectiveness Checklist for EU Foreign and Security Policy in Conflict and Crisis Situations

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# JOINT Effectiveness Checklist for EU Foreign and Security Policy in Conflict and Crisis Situations

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## Abstract

The JOINT Effectiveness Checklist provides a comparatively simple framework for policy-makers and researchers to analyse the effectiveness of the EU's response to conflicts and crises. It adds value to existing evaluation tools by assessing effectiveness relative to the level of difficulty of the policy environment, and adapting and further developing existing standard policy assessment criteria/indicators specifically to the requirements of the multi-actor/multi-level/multi-sector nature of the EU foreign and security policy.

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## Introduction

As the European Union aims to be a coherent actor in world affairs, the JOINT Effectiveness Checklist provides EU policy-makers and researchers with a simple tool to systematically assess the effectiveness of EU foreign and security policy (EUFSP) in a given conflict or crisis. It does so by taking into account that the EU as a 27-member partly supranational body is a sui generis type of actor in a predominantly nation-state driven international system. Therefore, when referring to EUFSP, this tool refers to the full body of European external action, including both EU and member states external policies.

European foreign and security policy does not happen in a vacuum. The framework conditions which EUFSP actors encounter in a given conflict or crisis situation differs in their level of difficulty and substantially affect the prospects of policy impact. The framing environment that conditions the impact potential of EUFSP therefore constitutes the first step of analysis of the Checklist. In the second step, the Checklist measures the effectiveness of EUFSP relative to stated objectives and aims by means of a catalogue of assessment criteria and indicators which can be applied to any conflict or crisis. “Effectiveness” in this context is understood as the product of consistency, impact and sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

The Checklist is a practical tool for policy-makers and analysts to conduct an indicative trend analysis that can provide a tentative yet substantiated snapshot of the main strengths and weaknesses, challenges and opportunities of EU foreign and security policy in a given conflict or crisis. The Checklist is meant to steer, adapt and improve policy processes in order to increase EUFSP effectiveness on the ground rather than provide exact measurement of input, output and outcome of policies. With its two-pronged approach, the Checklist tool allows for both swift indicative assessment and tentative trend-building over time, as well as for indicative comparisons of EU responses to different conflicts. The checklist is a trend indicator, not a comprehensive evaluation tool, and as such is meant to

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<sup>1</sup> In the JOINT project we use a slightly different definition of “sustainability” than in standard evaluation lingo. Whereas in OECD/DAC evaluation schemes “sustainability” is being understood as the extent to which the net benefits of an intervention continue – or are likely to continue – over time, JOINT rather looks at the ongoing commitment of EUFSP to reach its declared objectives with an in-built capability to adapt to a changing environment.

supplement and not replace regular in-depth monitoring and evaluation tools of EUFSP.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Methodology

Methodologically sound concepts to measure foreign and security policy impact are scarce, both in academia and among practitioners. Notable exceptions are the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines for Evaluations* and the *European Foreign Policy Scorecard*, published annually between 2011 and 2016 by a European think tank, the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR).<sup>3</sup> Since the ECFR Scorecard was meant to be a rating instrument, it was not used as a point of reference for the JOINT Checklist. Yet it provided useful insights into the muddy waters of policy impact assessment methodology.

Importantly, in a first step, it needs to be clarified what a policy assessment tool can and what it cannot deliver. The ECFR Scorecard team argued that “there is no quantitative tool that can adequately capture performance in foreign policy” as “[d]iplomacy is more often about managing problems than fixing them, biding time, choosing the worst of two evils, finding an exit strategy, saving face, etc.”<sup>4</sup> This approach, however, reflects the aspiration of rating the quality of EUFSP (via benchmarking, indexing or scoring) as more or less “good”.

The JOINT Checklist takes a different approach: it does not seek to rate performance. Instead, it aims to assess the effectiveness (consistency, impact and sustainability) of EUFSP in comparison to stated objectives, invested resources, capacities and framework conditions during a given period or moment in time.

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<sup>2</sup> The checklist has been turned into a web-based tool and is freely usable here: <https://jointchecklist.iai.it>.

<sup>3</sup> Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Evaluation Policy and Guidelines for Evaluations*, The Hague, 2009, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/iob-evaluation-policy-and-guidelines-for-evaluations.pdf>; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>; European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) website: *European Foreign Policy Scorecard*, <https://ecfr.eu/scorecard>.

<sup>4</sup> ECFR, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2010*, London, ECFR, March 2011, p. 130, <https://ecfr.eu/scorecard/2010>.

## 1.1 A hybrid evaluation and review tool

To make the best use of the JOINT Checklist, it is important to understand the differences between monitoring, review and evaluation.

Monitoring is an instrument of internal management. It measures the progress of planned operations and activities designed to achieve larger policy objectives based on a pre-established set of indicators. For evaluation, monitoring is indispensable as it provides the data set for it.

A review is an instrument – periodic or ad hoc – to assess the performance and the results of an intervention. It is a policy analysis tool that helps decision-makers to adjust goals, policies and interventions to changes on the ground or in the political environment. It provides a bird-view to put interventions into perspective.

The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) – considered the gold standard of policy impact evaluation – defines evaluation as an “assessment [...] of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results.” Its aim is “to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, [...] efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.”<sup>5</sup> Evaluations aim to provide a causal link between an intervention and changes on the ground. In short: evaluation is about attribution. Therefore, one of the key objectives of evaluations is to gain insights for necessary adjustments of interventions in order to increase the intervention impact.

We have designed JOINT Checklist as a hybrid instrument: It is both a review and an evaluation kit as it is positioned at the interface of actual policy implementation evaluation and long-term policy impact review.

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<sup>5</sup> OECD/DAC, “Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance”, in *DAC Principles for Effective Aid*, Paris, OECD, 1992, p. 131-138 at p. 132, <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/35019650.pdf>.

## 1.2 Concepts

JOINT Checklist's main point of reference is the Dutch Foreign Ministry's evaluation framework. It is based on the OECD/DAC Principles,<sup>6</sup> which rest on five key criteria: consistency, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance and sustainability. Even though the JOINT Checklist refers to these commonly accepted international standards of policy evaluation, it has widened these concepts in order to adapt evaluation parameters of development policy to foreign and security policy. Weaving its own conceptual framework of contextual factors (internal contestation, regional fragmentation, multipolar competition) into the evaluation framework, the JOINT Checklist is able to depict the specific level of complexity, context and difficulty in which EU policy actors develop and implement EUFSP.

## 1.3 Attribution gap

The difficulty to establish a causal relationship between policy intervention and impact – the attribution gap – is methodologically challenging. As EUFSP does not take place in a vacuum, constituting a causal link between European policies on the one hand and effectiveness on the other is problematic. Moreover, goals that are important to the EU can be met by other actors without any meaningful EU engagement. By a similar token, EU objectives can be undermined despite coherent and sustained EU efforts. The ECFR Scorecard dealt with the attribution gap pragmatically: it deemed Europeans to be successful if their objectives were met (“not penalised for having been helped by circumstances”).<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the ECFR Scorecard spoke of “outcome”, rather than “result” or “impact”, which suggest a causal link between EU policies and a change of situation on the ground. JOINT follows this example in assessing “effectiveness” against pre-stated policy objectives, not as a causal relationship between input and impact.

Conversely, policy analysts also need to take note of counterfactual evidence: how to measure what the EU is not doing? In the absence of meaningful action, what

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<sup>6</sup> OECD, *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, cit. This OECD framework rests on the foundation of OECD/DAC's groundbreaking work on policy evaluation in the field of development cooperation, published in the early 1990s (the so-called “DAC Principles” of 1991).

<sup>7</sup> ECFR, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2010*, cit., p. 131.


could have happened or changed if the EU had taken action? Or if it had intervened in a different manner?

These considerations lead to another key question: the leverage of the EU or any constellation of EU actors in a given foreign and security context. The notion that a European engagement could by itself fix a problem is often – if not always – illusory. In a world that is defined by a high degree of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity causal feedback loops are hard to establish – hence attribution, by the sheer nature of foreign and security policy, remains a vague concept.

## 1.4 Developing meaningful indicators

The indicators contained in the Checklist were developed according to a thorough process. First, through qualitative interviews with JOINT's case study authors, we gathered a first raw collection of possible indicators for each of the three criteria (consistency, impact, sustainability). By looking for reiterative patterns in the qualitative data from the nine JOINT case studies, we developed a set of independent (de-contextualised) indicators that were applicable to all nine case studies, and potentially to any crises or conflict in the future. Second, after an exchange with JOINT consortium experts, we generated an aggregated list of assessment criteria. Third, the aggregated data were complemented and refined by the results of a literature review, including key resources from established monitoring and evaluation authorities.

Measuring the impact and effectiveness of EUFSP in a single instrument faces many difficulties. One of the main obstacles relates to context and the comparability of different foreign policy settings: ending armed conflicts, negotiating nuclear non-proliferation arrangements, managing migration, enhancing post-conflict justice not only rely on different EUFSP toolkits but are also bound by quite different qualities of public discourse within the 27 EU member states. In short: A set of criteria for assessing impact and effectiveness to end the civil war in Syria differ considerably from EUFSP objectives (and a set of criteria for assessing impact and effectiveness) to conclude the negotiation of a nuclear non-proliferation agreement with Iran. Yet, it was our aim to design a useful instrument to assess EUFSP in all these different environments without falling into the banality trap.



Another challenge refers to the fact that the assessment of “success”, “impact”, “effectiveness” or “sustainability” is likely to lead to different results depending on the moment or time period of assessment. Since diplomatic crises can morph into a full-fledged violent conflict, a hot war into a frozen conflict, and conflicting parties can be reconciled, all analysis is time- and context-bound. What might be considered a success at one time can turn into an outright failure as contexts and policy goals change. This has profound impact on the development and selection of indicators to measure the effectiveness of EUPSP. While contexts and policy goals change over time, indicators need to be reliable, stable and consistent. If not, measuring progress would be impossible.

Literature on indicators list five key criteria for meaningful indicators,<sup>8</sup> which must be:

- *observable* – indicators need to be observed and reported through a reliable source;
- *consistent* – data collection must be consistent using comparable methods over time;
- *stable* – an indicator must be stable over time to allow comparisons and track events;
- *relevant* – an indicator must be relevant to the issue at stake, i.e., it needs to measure a causal relationship (input–output–outcome causality);
- *specific* – an indicator should measure only one item at the time;
- *measurable* – indicators need to come with a yardstick, i.e., they need to be quantifiable (counts, percentages, proportions or ratios).

All indicators of the JOINT Effectiveness Checklist have been evaluated against these criteria to ensure assessment quality.

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<sup>8</sup> Randolph H. Pherson and John Pyrik, *Analyst's Guide to Indicators*, Washington, Pherson Associates LLC, 2018.



## 2. Checklist user guide

The JOINT Checklist uses a three-step approach to support EU policy-makers and analysts in their effort to pursue an assessment of an effective common foreign and security policy: a baseline conflict analysis (1) which serves as the base for the Checklist assessment (2), the results of which is then graphically visualised (3).

### 2.1 Step 1 – Baseline conflict analysis: Getting the context right

An assessment of the effectiveness of EUFSP must rest on a common understanding of the conflict at hand; only then can the EU's response be meaningfully assessed. A baseline conflict analysis that is in line with the European External Action Service's *2020 Guidance Note on the Use of Conflict Analysis in Support of EU External Action*, is a preliminary step to the use of the Checklist tool.<sup>9</sup> In case no up-to-date baseline conflict analysis is available at EU institutional level, at least a rough overview of the conflict or crisis at stake should be produced to serve as common ground for any further analysis of EUFSP effectiveness.

With its 2020 Guidance Note, the EEAS has defined a common standard for EUFSP conflict analyses. The guideline helps to develop a structured analysis that offers key insights into conflict dynamics, the risks of violent conflict, key drivers and triggers of conflict, stakeholders involved and an outlook on the future development of the conflict (scenarios). For most conflicts, EU institutions and agencies may already have produced a thorough conflict analysis that adheres to EEAS Guidance Note's standards (joint, integrated, evidence-based, timely and recurrent). Where such conflict analyses are not at hand, JOINT Checklist provides a simple-to-use grid to quickly produce such a baseline analysis.

Whereas standard analytical frameworks primarily look at conflicts from a bird-eye perspective, a JOINT Checklist Baseline Analysis also takes stock of the conditioning environment, both within and outside the EU. This environment is captured by three sets of contextual factors that often work as constraints on EUFSP: internal

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<sup>9</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS) and European Commission, *2020 Guidance Note on the Use of Conflict Analysis in Support of EU External Action* (Ares/2021/2739406), 23 April 2021, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/guidance\\_note\\_on\\_eu\\_conflict\\_analysis\\_final\\_-280421.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/guidance_note_on_eu_conflict_analysis_final_-280421.pdf).

(intra-EU) contestation, regional fragmentation and multipolar competition. JOINT defines the three constraining factors as follows:<sup>10</sup>

- *Internal contestation* refers to intra-European disputes (among EU member states but also in domestic debates) about fundamental norms, long-standing positions or established practices of EUFSP.
- *Regional fragmentation* refers to the erosion or collapse of state authorities as well as their ability to set and enforce rules of engagement within regions, states and communities.
- *Multipolar competition* refers to the degree to which global or regional powers approach crisis and conflict management with divergent views and with competing definitions of what might be an acceptable state or solution.

Combined, these constraining factors constitute the political and operational ecosystem in which EUFSP is being developed and implemented – in other words, the level of difficulty in which EU conflict management efforts take place. JOINT integrates them into the conflict analysis which then can serve as a baseline analysis to underpin the assessment of EUFSP effectiveness in a given crisis or conflict.<sup>11</sup>

## Questionnaire for baseline conflict analysis

1. *Profile*: What is the context that shapes conflict?

- Is there a history of conflict? (e.g., when? For how long? Conventional conflict or insurgency? How many people killed and displaced? Who is targeted? Methods of violence? Where?)
- What political, economic, social and environmental institutions and structures have shaped conflict? (e.g., elections, reform processes, economic growth,

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<sup>10</sup> Riccardo Alcaro et al., “A Joined-Up Union, a Stronger Europe. A Conceptual Framework to Investigate EU Foreign and Security Policy in a Complex and Contested World”, in *JOINT Research Papers*, No. 8 (March 2022), <https://www.jointproject.eu/?p=969>.

<sup>11</sup> Our baseline conflict analysis uses the analytical grid of the *Conflict Analysis Topic Guide* of the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) of the University of Birmingham (May 2017, <https://gsdrc.org/?p=67127>). This four-step analytical grid to assess the conflict is complemented by a fifth step provided by the JOINT project which analyses the international setting of the conflict. By working through the questionnaire, an analyst can quickly collect and interpret information on four key criteria of a crisis or conflict: the context of the conflict (profile), the actors that shape the conflict, the structural causes of a conflict as well as its dynamics. The five points will allow the drafting of a nuanced baseline conflict analysis that assesses not only the conflict itself but also the regional and international framework environment in which it takes place.

inequality, employment, social groups and composition, demographics and resource exploitation)

## 2. *Actors*: Who are the actors that influence conflict?

- Who are the main actors? (e.g., the military, leaders and commanders of non-state armed groups, criminal groups).
- What are their interests, concerns, goals, hopes, fears, strategies, positions, preferences, worldviews, expectations and motivations? (e.g., autonomy, inequality between groups ('horizontal inequality'), political power, ethno-nationalist, reparations).
- What power do they have, how do they exert power, what resources or support do they have, are they vulnerable? (e.g., local legitimacy through provision of security, power over corrupt justice institutions, weapons and capacity to damage infrastructure).
- What are their incentives and disincentives for conflict and peace? (e.g., benefiting or losing from the war economy, prestige, retribution for historic grievances).
- What capacities do they have to affect the context?
- Who could be considered spoilers? What divides people? Who exercises leadership and how? (e.g., economic beneficiaries of conflict, criminal groups, opposition leader).
- What could be considered capacities for peace? Are there groups calling for non-violence? What connects people across conflict lines? How do people cooperate? Who exercises leadership for peace and how? (e.g., civil society, religious authorities, local justice mechanisms).
- What are the relationships between actors, what are the trends, what is the strategic balance between actors (who is 'winning')? (e.g., conflictual, cooperative or business relationships).

## 3. *Causes*: What causes conflict?

- What are the structural causes of conflict? (e.g., competing territorial claims, unequal land distribution, political exclusion, poor governance, impunity, lack of state authority).
- What are the proximate causes of conflict? (e.g., arms proliferation, illicit criminal networks, emergence of self-defence non-state armed actors, overspill of conflict from a neighbouring country, natural resource discoveries).

#### 4. *Dynamics*: What are the current conflict dynamics/trends?

- What are the current conflict trends? What are the recent changes in behaviour? (e.g., conflict acts have increased but the number of deaths has decreased; political violence has intensified around local elections; defence spending has increased; paramilitaries have started running in local elections).
- Which factors of the conflict profile, actors and causes reinforce or undermine each other? Which factors balance or mitigate others? (e.g., horizontal economic and political inequalities can increase the risk of conflict; uncertainty about succession of the president strengthens party factionalism; cash for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration fuels small arms proliferation).
- What triggers conflict? (e.g., elections, economic and environmental shocks, economic crash, an assassination, coup, food price increases, a corruption scandal).
- What scenarios can be developed? (e.g., best-case scenario: a peace agreement is signed quickly and the conflict parties implement a ceasefire; worst-case scenario: local politicians mobilise along ethnic lines in the run-up to elections and political violence and riots increase where groups meet).

5. *Framework conditions for EU intervention*: As EUFSP takes place in an international environment shaped – not exclusively, but decisively – by internal contestation, regional fragmentation and multipolar competition, a thorough baseline analysis needs to assess how these factors mould the context of the conflict at hand:

5.1 *Internal contestation*: Intra-European dissent about EUFSP norms, positions and practices.

- To which degree do EU member states pursue multiple objectives so that their order of priority remains unclear or disputed?
- How do voting patterns in EU decision-making bodies, such as the European Council or the Foreign Affairs Council, reflect contestation of the EU consensus on the conflict?
- To which degree does alignment or divergence in policy positions among member states indicate internal contestation?
- To which degree does the formation and dissolution of coalitions among member states on specific foreign and security policy issues relevant to the conflict/crisis indicate contestation?

- Does the use of veto power by member states within EU decision-making processes highlight areas of contestation?
- To which degree do variations among member states in engagement and implementation of the EU policy consensus on the conflict indicate contestation of EU policy goals?
- Internal contestation can also emanate from civil society. How does public opinion polling within member states indicate disagreement with EU engagement and policy goals on the conflict?
- By a similar token, to which degree does analysis of media coverage (assessing the presence, intensity and leaning of debates on the conflict and the EU's engagement therein) indicate contestation?

5.2 *Regional fragmentation*: State authorities' monopoly over means of violence and their ability to set and enforce rules of engagement erodes or collapses.

- What is the frequency, intensity and geographic scope of security incidents, such as armed conflicts, insurgencies or terrorist attacks in the country/region? Do they indicate the erosion of state authority?
- How developed is state capacity? Government control over territory, the functioning of state institutions, the provision of public services, or the ability to enforce law and order can be indicators of state capacity.
- How developed is the rule of law within the region? Indicators: levels of corruption, judicial independence, respect for human rights, and the enforcement of legal frameworks.
- How many internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are originating from this region? High levels of displacement can be indicative of conflicts, instability, and weak state authority.
- What is public perception of state authority and the quality of governance? Indicators: trust in state institutions, perceptions of security, and the ability of the state to address local concerns.
- What is the assessment of international organisations? Utilising qualitative reports from international organisations, such as the United Nations or NGOs, can help measure regional fragmentation, as these reports often assess the political, social, and security dynamics within a region and provide insights into the erosion or collapse of state authority.
- What is the assessment of conflict mapping data, such as conflict databases or conflict event data? These data sources track the occurrence and characteristics

of conflicts, including the actors involved, the nature of violence, and the geographic scope of the conflicts.

5.3 *Multipolar competition*: Global or regional powers involvement in and management of a crisis or conflict.

- What is the amount of defence spending by countries as a percentage of their GDP or in absolute terms? Higher military expenditures can indicate a focus on building military capabilities and potential competition with other states.
- What is the level of arms sales (imports and exports) in the region? Increased arms sales can indicate efforts to enhance military capabilities and this influence/intensify multipolar competition.
- How do trade relations (bilateral trade flows and economic interdependencies) between countries affect competition dynamics? Greater economic interactions, such as high trade volumes and investments, may indicate competition for markets and economic influence.
- Similarly, how do flows of foreign direct investment (FDI), their amount and direction between countries, reflect efforts to gain economic footholds and strategic advantages in other countries?
- Examine the formation of alliances and partnerships between states. Track the number and strength of alliances, military cooperation agreements, and strategic partnerships as indicators of alignment and competition.
- What influence do key international competitors have in international organisations? Influence and voting patterns of countries in bodies like the United Nations, the World Bank, or regional organisations conditions their ability to shape global norms and policies.
- What is the frequency and severity of cybersecurity attacks and cyber espionage attributed to different states? Increased cyber incidents can reflect efforts to gain advantages in information warfare and intelligence gathering.
- To which degree are key international players involved in space exploration and satellite launches? Greater activity and success in space – the number and success rate of space missions and satellite launches – can indicate competition for technological superiority and military capabilities.
- Are there any significant territorial disputes, border clashes, or proxy conflicts involving multiple states? Heightened conflicts can indicate competition over resources, influence, or regional dominance.
- How are key international players perceived globally. Polls can indicate positive

or negative perceptions which can reflect competition for soft power and influence.

## 2.2 Step 2 – Checklist: Assessing effectiveness

With the Baseline Analysis in mind, the JOINT Checklist looks at three key parameters to assess the effectiveness of EUFSP: consistency, impact and sustainability. We define these parameters as follows:

- *Consistency* is the extent to which EUFSP actors (EU institutions and member states) coordinate actions and/or carry out policies that reinforce (not undermine) one another and aim for the same objectives.<sup>12</sup>
- *Impact* relates to changes in the situation on the ground which are in line with formulated EU objectives and ideally traceable to EU action or inaction.
- *Sustainability* of EU engagement with an in-built capacity for generating consensus on policy objectives and adapting instruments to changing circumstances.

The Checklist provides a universally applicable scheme to assess EUFSP performance in any given crisis or conflict (see tables 1-3 below). Each of these EUFSP key parameters (consistency, impact, sustainability) are defined by different *criteria* using a *set of indicators* and *qualifiers* to provide a qualitative estimate on the degree of fulfilment of each indicator – a bespoke four-point scheme that allows to translate qualitative assessments into a quantifiable system: the highest rating (3) equals the perfect fulfilment of an indicator, the lowest (1) non-performance. If the indicator is not applicable in a particular EUFSP context, analysts fill in “0” to indicate that the indicator is irrelevant. The scheme feeds the visualisation tool (see Figures 1-3 below).

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<sup>12</sup> Dilemma: There might be a coherent policy in place, and resources to implement policies but with no results on the ground. So, only a holistic and integrated evaluation of all factors will give an indication about the interplay of different parameters and condition in producing desired EUFSP outcomes.

**Table 1** | Assessment criteria: “Consistency”

No.	Criteria and indicators	Qualifiers
<b>1</b>	<b>EU institutional level</b>	
1.1	Situation assessment: EU has a shared assessment of the conflict/crisis	3_Recent EU situation assessment adopted / policy documents and statement consistently reflect shared assessment (formal consensus) 2_Outdated EU situation assessment / moderate inconsistencies in policy documents and statements reflect some divergences in situation assessment 1_No EU situation assessment adopted / policy documents and statements reflect significant divergences in situation assessment among EU institutions and/or member states 0_Indicator not applicable
1.2	EU interests in crisis/ conflict	3_EU vital interests are affected by crisis/conflict 2_Major non-vital EU interests affected by crisis/conflict 1_Minor EU interests affected by crisis/conflict 0_Indicator not applicable
1.3	Europeanisation of crisis/ conflict dossier at EU level	3_The EU Council leads EU policy on crisis/conflict 2_EU policy led by one or more member states in coordination with EU institutions 1_Member states lead EU policy with little to no coordination with EU institutions 0_Indicator not applicable
1.4	EU policy objectives	3_Key policy objectives are fully and unequivocally stated in EU policy documents 2_Written policy objectives are not fully developed 1_Policy objectives are not formulated in writing 0_Indicator not applicable
1.5	Consistency of other EU sectoral policies with EU conflict/crisis management efforts	3_EU policies in other sectors/policy areas/regions support EU crisis/conflict objectives and strategy 2_EU policies in other sectors/policy areas/regions do not meaningfully impact EU crisis/conflict objectives and strategy 1_EU policies in other sectors/policy areas/regions undermine EU crisis/conflict objectives and strategy 0_Indicator not applicable
1.6	EU institutions / lead groups (e.g., Visegrad, Weimar, Minsk, Normandy) effectively drive EU policy toward crisis/ conflict in absence of EU-27 consensus	3_EU institutions / lead groups are given the necessary space, competencies and resources to effectively steer policy 2_EU institutions / lead groups are not given the necessary space, competency and resources to steer policy but are not actively being obstructed 1_Member states and/or peer institutions / lead groups actively obstruct EU institutions' ability to steer policy 0_Indicator not applicable
<b>2</b>	<b>EU member states level</b>	
2.1	Consistency of member states policies with EU conflict/crisis management efforts	3_Member states policies in other sectors/policy areas/regions support EU conflict objectives and strategy 2_Member states policies in other sectors/policy areas/regions do not meaningfully impact EU conflict objectives and strategy 1_Member states policies in other sectors/policy areas/regions undermine EU conflict objectives and strategy 0_Indicator not applicable



2.2	EU ability to compartmentalise policy in case of deadlock on specific policy items	3_Member states agree on need for and terms of compartmentalisation 2_Member states agree on need for but not on terms of compartmentalisation 1_Member states disagree on need for compartmentalisation 0_Indicator not applicable
<b>3</b>	<b>Global governance level</b>	
3.1	EU/member states' role in multilateral groupings / international governance	3_Member states create / join multilateral groupings that strengthen the role of the EU 2_Member states do not create / join multilateral groupings, or these have no impact on the role of the EU 1_Member states create / join multilateral ad-hoc groupings that undermine the role of the EU 0_Indicator not applicable

**Table 2** | Assessment criteria: “Impact”

No.	Criteria and indicators	Qualifiers
<b>1</b>	<b>EU Influence on crisis/conflict parties</b>	
1.1	EU political/diplomatic influence on crisis/conflict parties (i.e., by stopping EU association/accession prospects)	3_EU has strong political levers to influence behaviour of conflict party/parties 2_EU has moderate political levers to influence conflict party/parties 1_EU has no direct political levers to influence conflict party/parties 0_Indicator not applicable
1.2	EU economic influence on conflict parties (i.e., through blockade of shipments, freezing of EU financial instruments)	3_EU has strong economic levers to influence behaviour of Crisis/conflict party/parties 2_EU has moderate economic levers to influence Crisis/conflict party/parties 1_EU has no direct economic levers to influence crisis/conflict party/parties 0_Indicator not applicable
1.3	EU military influence on conflict parties (i.e., through military intervention)	3_EU has strong military levers to influence behaviour of crisis/conflict party/parties 2_EU has moderate direct military levers to influence crisis/conflict party/parties 1_EU has no direct military levers to influence crisis/conflict party/parties 0_Indicator not applicable
1.4	EU cultural/soft power influence on conflict parties (i.e., through visa repeals for citizens, humanitarian aid etc.)	3_EU has strong cultural/soft power levers to influence behaviour of crisis/conflict party/parties 2_EU has moderate cultural/soft power levers to influence crisis/conflict party/parties 1_EU has no direct cultural/soft power levers to influence crisis/conflict party/parties 0_Indicator not applicable

<b>2</b>	<b>EU influence on relevant regional and international actors</b>	
2.1	EU leverage on key regional and international actors/stakeholders (i.e., withdrawal of financial resources)	3_EU/member states' leverage on relevant regional/international actors is strong 2_EU/member states' leverage on relevant regional/international actors is moderate 1_EU/member states leverage on relevant regional/international actors is minimal 0_Indicator not applicable
2.2	Effective co-ordination and consensus within EU to minimise impact of spoilers	3_Member states and EU institutions co-ordinate to minimise impact of spoilers 2_Member states and EU institutions co-ordination to minimise impact of spoilers is insufficient 1_Member states and EU institutions co-ordination efforts is ineffective or inexistent (possibly due to MS acting as spoilers) 0_Indicator not applicable
2.3	Co-ordination with allied regional/international/multilateral organisations to minimise impact of spoilers	3_EU efficiently co-ordinates with regional/international/multilateral partners to minimise impact of spoilers 2_EU co-ordination with regional/international/multilateral partners to minimise impact of spoilers is insufficient 1_EU co-ordination efforts with regional/international/multilateral partners are non-existent or ineffective, and/or some regional/international/multilateral partners act as spoilers 0_Indicator not applicable
<b>3</b>	<b>EU inaction</b>	
3.1	Impact of EU inaction on crisis/conflict parties	3_EU inaction invites positive interventions / deters negative interventions from crisis/conflict parties 2_EU deters conflict actors in some cases / softens negative action by crisis/conflict parties 1_EU inaction triggers negative action / fails to deter negative interventions from crisis/conflict parties 0_Indicator not applicable
3.2	Impact of EU inaction on third parties interventions	3_EU inaction motivates third parties to engage on conflict in line with EU policy goals 2_EU inaction creates a vacuum that invites third parties, both in line and against EU foreign policy goals 1_EU inaction creates a vacuum that triggers intervention of third parties opposed to EU policy goals 0_Indicator not applicable
<b>4</b>	<b>Human security/rights</b>	
4.1	Human security/rights impact of EU policy (including monitoring, regular human rights dialogues, conditionality)	3_EU/member states' policy has measurable positive impact on human rights indicators 2_EU/member states' policy has no measurable impact on human rights indicators / no causality can be established 1_EU/member states' policy has measurable negative impact on human rights indicators 0_Indicator not applicable

**Table 3** | Assessment criteria: “Sustainability”

No.	Criteria and indicators	Qualifiers
<b>1</b>	<b>EU ability to uphold commitment over times</b>	
1.1	Commitment by EU/ member states to provide crisis/conflict management, e.g. through reconstruction aid, security, technical cooperation, mediation etc., including necessary resources	3_Strong commitment, including resources and implementation 2_Partial commitment, including moderate availability of resources and/or partial implementation 1_Low level of commitment, including lack of resources, faltering implementation 0_Indicator not applicable
1.2	Regular review of crisis/conflict situation assessment (including regional and global context analysis)	3_Frequent, periodic situation assessment 2_Infrequent/ad hoc situation assessment 1_No established frequency/regularity for situation assessment 0_Indicator not applicable
1.3	Regular impact assessment of on-going EU policy / review of and adjustment of EU policies, interventions and measures	3_Frequent, periodic review of policy 2_Infrequent/ad hoc review of policy 1_No established frequency/regularity for policy review 0_Indicator not applicable
<b>2</b>	<b>International alignment</b>	
2.1	EU policy joint/co-ordinated with relevant multilateral/regional organisations (e.g. UN, AU)	3_High level of co-ordination (Heads of States / summit) 2_Medium level of co-ordination (line-ministries) 1_Low level of co-ordination (technical level) 0_Indicator not applicable
<b>3</b>	<b>Local/regional ownership and commitment</b>	
3.1	Local ownership of conflict resolution path supported by EU	3_Strong local ownership 2_Mixed; divided local ownership 1_Low local ownership 0_Indicator not applicable

## 2.3 Step 3 – Visualisation: Grasping complexity

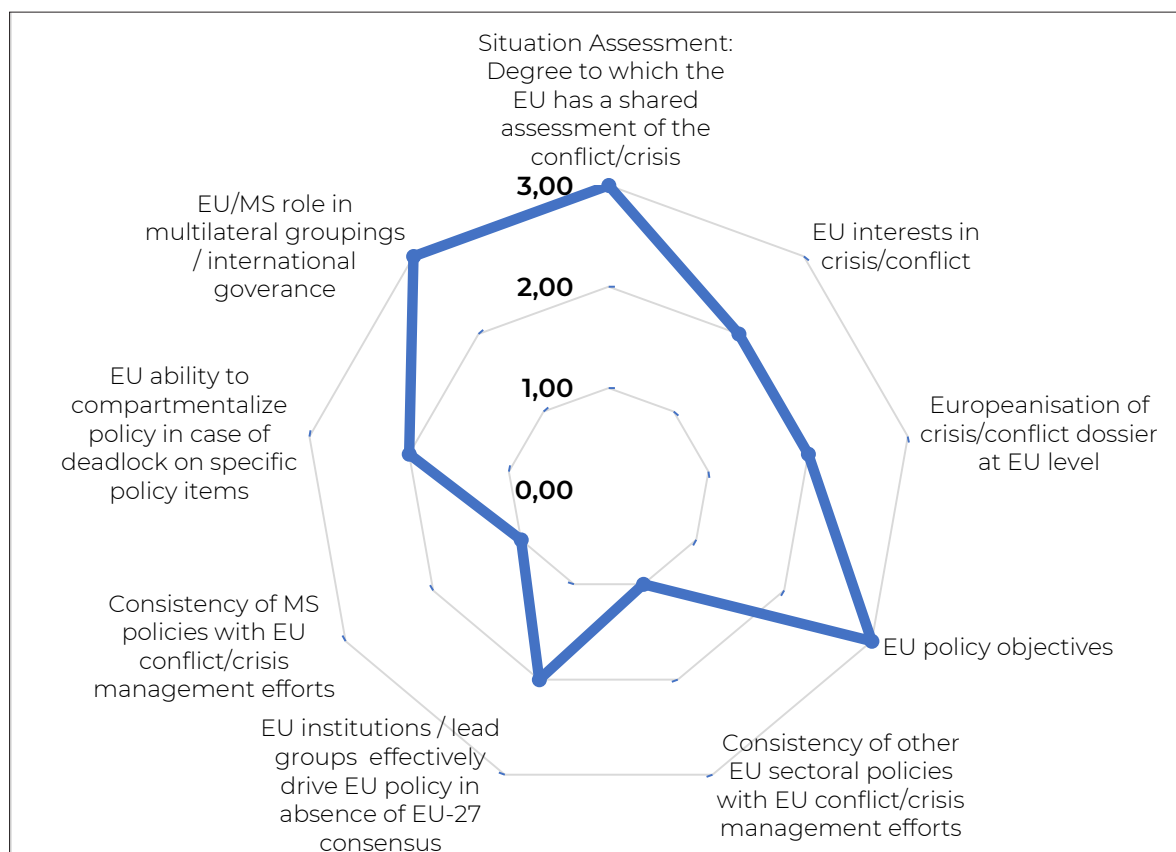
Once the Checklist criteria grid has been filled out, coding each indicator from 1-3 (or “0” if an indicator does not apply), the tool will automatically produce a *spider graph*, which is particularly apt to help digest mass data through visualisation. The graph will show the *degree of fulfilment* of pre-defined qualitative parameters in a single graph for the effectiveness of EUFSP (composed of the core pillars consistency, impact and sustainability).

Fulfilment of a criteria is being indexed by the highest rating scheme (3), non-performance with the lowest (1); if an indicator is not relevant for a particular assessment, this is specified by a “0”. Based on this multi-step qualifying scheme for

each indicator, the visualisation tool summarises the values of each category and determines an average that is being used for the visualisation in the spider graph.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the fuller a spider graph is filled by the grey area, the more consistent, impactful, and sustainable EUFSP is. Comparing graphs over time allows analysts and policy-makers alike to recognise change over time which in turn eases adaptation of policies and measures in a constantly changing environment.

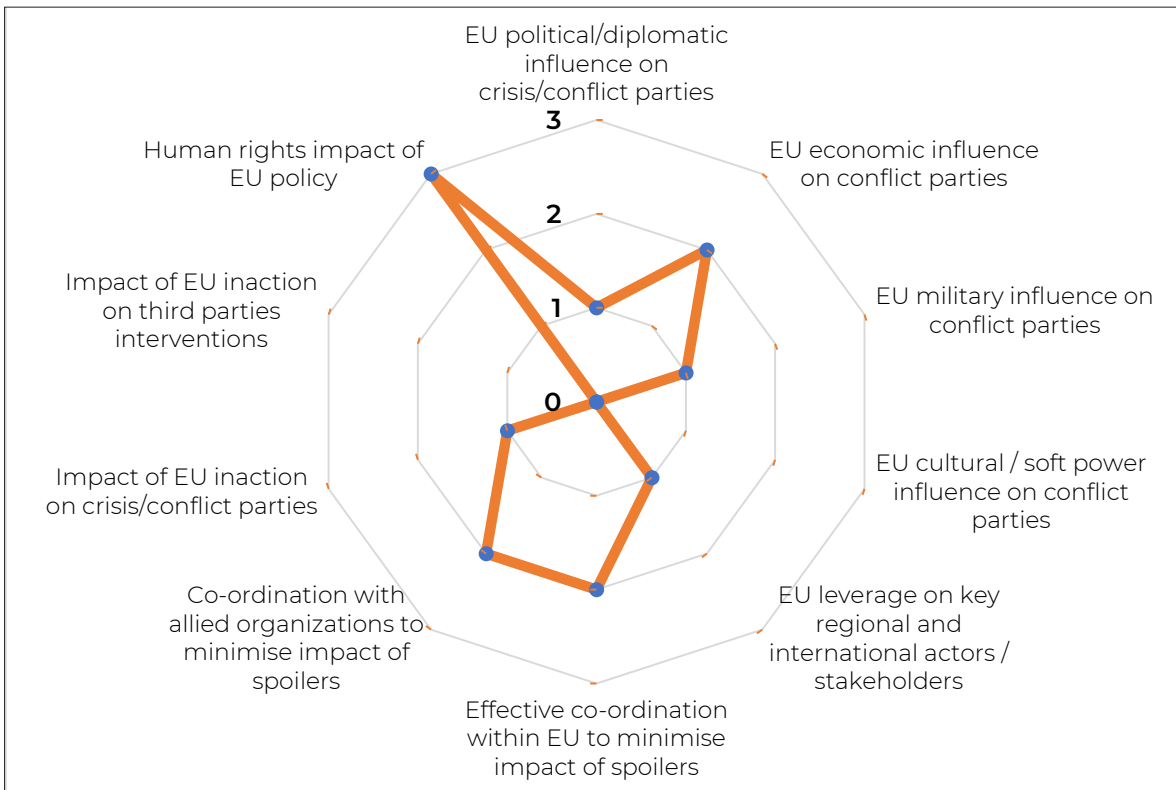
In this, the tool should be taken for what it is – and what it is not. It is not an objective yardstick to measure EUFSP performance, success or outcomes. It should be seen as a communicative aide for analysts and policy-makers to assess EUFSP against proclaimed objectives by providing a common analytical framework and shared lexicon. Critically, the tool is inherently prone to improvement, especially considering that it has been turned into a web-based, open source tool susceptible to testing, constant refinement and upgrading.

**Figure 1** | Simulation of spider graph “EUFSP consistency” in a given crisis/conflict

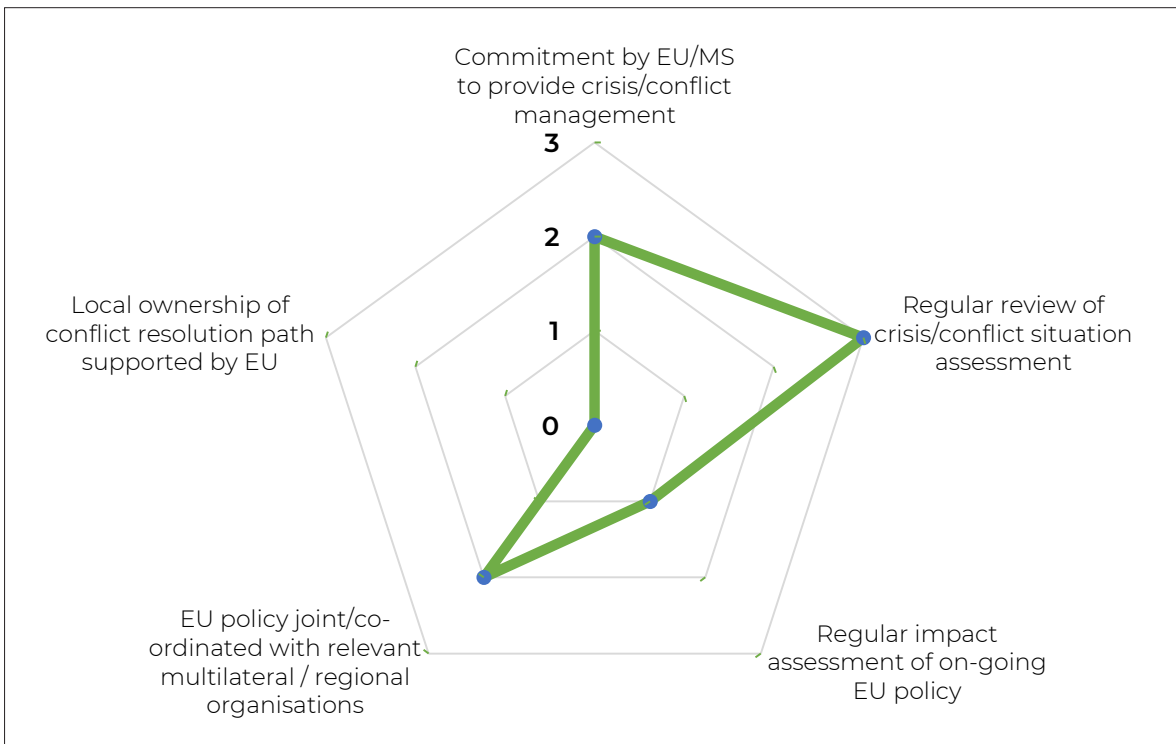


<sup>13</sup> The assessments tool is based on MS Excel but can be exported into any other compatible digital format. JOINT aims at setting up a web-based open source tool that could be used by academia, think tanks and practitioners of EUFSP free of charge.

**Figure 2** | Simulation of spider graph “EUFSP impact” in a given crisis/conflict



**Figure 3** | Simulation of spider graph “EUFSP sustainability” in a given crisis/conflict



## Annotated bibliography

The state of the art on approaches to measure EUFSP and defining of realistic evaluation criteria for a more effective EUFSP shows research gaps in two respects. On the one hand, there is a lack of a unified definitional delimitation and precision regarding what might constitute evaluation criteria for EUFSP in general. As a consequence, no substantial efforts have been made – at least not within the scientific community – to set up a generally applicable conceptual framework (not to speak of actual catalogues) to measure the impact of EUFSP. Academic debates on measuring the effectiveness of EUFSP are rather concerned with theoretical and methodological questions than on actually trying to assess the consistency, impact and sustainability of EUFSP.<sup>14</sup>

The sources presented here shed light on methodological approaches, their applicability and weaknesses, and undertake a concretisation of concepts. What they all have in common is that they argue formally and theoretically, but do not undertake actual operationalisations or comparisons. Although indicators for measuring effective EUFSP are listed in some places, only the aforementioned large-scale project of the ECFR undertakes a qualitative comprehensive evaluation. In sum, while the literature reflects legitimate deliberations on measuring and evaluating EUFSP, these are rather unrealistic in implementation and may have weak explanatory power despite enormous amounts of data. The multiple pleas for the application of different methods invalidate themselves by the lack of practical implementations.

An example of this is the work of Bjurulf et al., which suggests using a triangulation approach to achieve a reliable cause-effect result in impact evaluation. It discusses the combination of different methods, such as process-tracing, generic controls and contribution analysis, to evaluate interventions and their impact.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The only exceptions being the ECFR Foreign Policy Scorecard and the Dutch Foreign Ministries adaptation of the OECD/DAC evaluation framework which we briefly discuss in our introduction and that we consider to be a tool of applied social sciences rather than a scientific approach to measuring the impact of EUFSP.

<sup>15</sup> Staffan Bjurulf, Evert Vedung and C. G. Larsson, “A Triangulation Approach to Impact Evaluation”, in *Evaluation*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January 2013), p. 56-73, DOI 10.1177/1356389012472248.

Casier chooses a more EU-specific focus when examining the EU role in the context of neighbourhood policy. He concludes that there is too strong a focus on intended EU policies in the study and measurement of the success of foreign policy, whereas the influence of unintended policies and the structure of the actual target countries should be at the forefront of effectiveness analyses. Accordingly, research should focus more on the interplay of policy side effects and intended EU influences.<sup>16</sup> The analysis draws on the EU's regional strategy to increase stability and the participatory cost-benefit calculations of EU neighbouring states.

While Casier and other authors tend to present approaches of retrospective or ongoing evaluation, Chigas and Woodrow examine preventive requirements that can more systematically capture and compare the longer-term impact of peacebuilding programmes on existing and violent conflicts. These include comprehensive conflict analysis, precise naming of the target project, project planning, and communicative linkage.<sup>17</sup>

Delahais and Toulemonde formulate a pragmatic approach to applying the principles of theory-based evaluation: by assessing random causality chains from beginning to end, they report whether the intended changes have occurred or not and identify the main contribution to the changes.<sup>18</sup> Using case studies from development aid, agriculture, employment and governance, Delahais and Toulemonde aim at assessing the impact of policy interventions through the so-called Contribution Analysis methodology. Due to the overwhelming complexity of these assessments (six-step approach plus storytelling), we considered this tool as not practicable enough for JOINT purposes – even though it addresses thoroughly the key challenge of attributing impact to concrete policy interventions (input–output–outcome–impact).

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<sup>16</sup> Tom Casier, “The European Neighbourhood Policy in a New Geopolitical Context”, in Federiga Bindi (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of the European Union. Assessing Europe's Role in the World*, 3rd ed., Washington, The Brookings Institution, 2022, p. 131-141.

<sup>17</sup> Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow, “Demystifying Impacts in Evaluation Practice”, in *New Routes*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2008), p. 19-22, <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/?p=3293>.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Delahais and Jacques Toulemonde, “Applying Contribution Analysis: Lessons from Five Years of Practice”, in *Evaluation*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (July 2012), p. 281-293, DOI 10.1177/1356389012450810.

Driskens and van Schaik take a step back in their analysis and examine the fundamental challenges to the coherence assessment of EU foreign policy. They scrutinise (by then) new institutional frameworks and complexities created by the Lisbon Treaty through the EEAS and the diplomatic corps of the 27 member states. The paper serves as a reference for the difficult measurability of EU policy coherence and at the same time shows that the hurdles are more target-oriented and definitional than methodological.<sup>19</sup>

Gutner and Thompson provide answers to the reasons for a more effective and better performance of international organisations.<sup>20</sup> They undertake the important analytical work of delineating conceptual criteria and distinguish, for example, between performance and effectiveness. However, the chapter is more conceptual in character, so it does not address more concrete or specific indicators, but merely proposes a framework that highlights on relevant aspects of international organisations performance.

ECFR, on the other hand, developed the European Foreign Policy Scorecard in 2011 to provide a systematic annual assessment of Europe's performance in its dealings with the rest of the world.<sup>21</sup> Here, a team of forty researchers examined and ranked the collective performance of all EU actors, not just that of a particular institution or country. Europe was assessed based on themes, which are divided into sixty-five components and given scores based on unity, resources and results/impact. Leaders, supporters and laggards were then categorised. The ECFR Scorecard is one of the most comprehensive and relevant approaches for the later stages of the JOINT Project. It is one of the few research efforts that builds definitions and names clear indicators. In addition, it assesses them in a structured way and provides some kind of measurement. However, the scorecard does not use quantitative data (e.g., Human Development Index), but only grades given by observers (e.g., Freedom House). This approach makes such a complex large-scale assessment

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<sup>19</sup> Edith Drieskens and Louise van Schaik, "Clingendael Input Paper", in Edith Drieskens and Louise van Schaik (eds), "The European External Action Service: Preparing for Success", in *Clingendael Papers*, No. 1 (December 2010), p. 7-18, <https://www.clingendael.org/node/2330>.

<sup>20</sup> Tamar Gutner and Alexander Thompson, "Analyzing the Performance of International Organizations", in Knud Erik Jørgensen and Katie Verlin Laatikainen (eds), *Routledge Handbook on the European Union and International Institutions. Performance, Policy, Power*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, p. 55-70.

<sup>21</sup> ECFR, *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2010*, cit.



possible in the first place but weakens its ability to have results verified/rebutted. There is always something subjective attached to the evaluation of indicators and the comparability of problems is also only possible to a limited extent.

An article by Jørgensen from 2013 deals with the EU's engagement in multilateral institutions, examining how the EU seeks to shape international institutions and how it operates within them. The article refers to the measurement of the EU's "performance" as an actor in multilateral contexts, again less about the substantive operationalisation of foreign policy indicators than about conceptual approaches, i.e., the meaning of performance and how it can be understood as a concept.<sup>22</sup> Two years earlier, Jørgensen and other authors published an article on EU performance in international institutions.<sup>23</sup> The focus was on EU performance in multilateral negotiations in international institutions and the underlying performance concept, which was divided into four core elements: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency and financial/ resource viability.<sup>24</sup> It was concluded that measuring the four core elements poses many problems and that the policy objectives are often so broad that they are almost meaningless for an evaluation. Proving causality is one of the biggest hurdles.

A 2010 paper by Kleistra and van Willigen raised the question of whether multilateral diplomacy can be evaluated through performance-based models and how performance should be measured in complex, multilateral decision-making arenas.<sup>25</sup> Various methods were weighed, including performance-based evaluation models used in the context of the new public administration. They were not seen as useful for evaluating diplomacy, although there was a greater demand for better data on the implementation of policy objectives. However, systematic


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<sup>22</sup> Knud Erik Jørgensen, "Analyzing the Performance of the European Union", in Knud Erik Jørgensen and Katie Verlin Laatikainen (eds), *Routledge Handbook on the European Union and International Institutions. Performance, Policy, Power*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2013, p. 86-101.

<sup>23</sup> Knud Erik Jørgensen, Sebastian Oberthür and Jamal Shahin, "Introduction: Assessing the EU's Performance in International Institutions - Conceptual Framework and Core Findings", in *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 33, No. 6 (2011), p. 599-620, DOI 10.1080/07036337.2011.606681.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 603. Quoted from Charles Lusthaus et al., *Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance*, Ottawa, International Development Research Centre, 2002, <https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/16314/organizational-assessment-framework-improving-performance>.

<sup>25</sup> Yvonne Kleistra and Niels Van Willigen, "Evaluating Diplomacy: A Mission Impossible?", in *Evaluation*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (April 2010), p. 119-135, DOI 10.1177/1356389009360476.



data on diplomacy objectives, costs and outcomes are difficult to collect, especially since government interventions in foreign policy usually follow value judgements and political expediency. Foreign policy goals are long-term, general and vague, and decision-making takes place through negotiations, which are too complex to be classified in an input-output model. The authors nevertheless named four requirements for forms of successful intervention: connectedness, i.e., the degree of conformity of an intervention with the political goals as formulated in a country's foreign policy; responsiveness (is an intervention suitable for achieving a consensus of opinion?); timeliness (is the intervention carried out at a favourable time?); scope: radius of action, directness and involvement. Instruments of intervention listed included participation in meetings, conducting a demarche and supporting proposals. The examples listed highlight the vagueness of the indicators and the difficulty of measuring them.

Five years later, Kleistra and van Willigen published another paper on the evaluation of diplomacy and the challenges associated with it. Methodologically, like other works, they referred to attribution and contribution analyses and emphasised the importance of the definitional distinction of study categories such as effectiveness, performance and impact.<sup>26</sup> Again, this article features an academic rather than a practical approach, thereby limiting its applicability for policy practitioners.

In one of the earliest works on the subject of EU foreign policy instruments by Smith, a different approach was taken to assessing EU foreign policy. Unlike other works, Smith did not use conceptual categories such as effectiveness or performance, but identified four foreign policy instruments, namely propaganda, diplomacy, economics and military. His analysis focused more on how these instruments are used and to what extent they can be measured positively or negatively. Examples of positive measurement are the support of countries through aid or the granting of loans, which can be seen as positive, while negative examples include the withdrawal of agreements or the imposition of embargoes.<sup>27</sup> Smith's approach

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<sup>26</sup> Yvonne Kleistra and Niels Van Willigen, "Evaluating the Impact of EU Diplomacy: Pitfalls and Challenges", in Joachim A. Koops and Gjovalin Macaj (eds), *The European Union as a Diplomatic Actor*, Basingstoke/New York, Macmillan, 2015, p. 52-68.

<sup>27</sup> Karen E. Smith, "The Instruments of European Union Foreign Policy", in Jan Zielonka (ed.), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, The Hague/London/Boston, Kluwer Law International, 1998, p. 67-85.

is more normative compared to other works and less an attempt at objective evaluation. White, on the other hand, reflects on different methodologies and the extent to which the success of their application relies on a common definitional basis of indicators and objects of study. He explains that methodological debates are meaningless unless they agree on a common starting point.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Howard White, “A Contribution to Current Debates in Impact Evaluation”, in *Evaluation*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (April 2010), p. 153-164, DOI 10.1177/1356389010361562.

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