

# STUDY ON THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES MOBILISING PUBLIC SECTOR EXPERTISE FOR DEVELOPMENT - PHASE II: ANALYSIS PAPER

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Summary of the main findings

Although there is no generally accepted European definition of ‘public sector expertise’ (PSE), EU member states use the term to indicate the exchange of knowledge, expertise and advice between civil servants or other public sector experts in EU member states and third countries to solve shared policy and institutional problems. The added value and the comparative advantage of PSE in development cooperation with respect to other modalities of technical cooperation (not public) lies in the fact that the PSE, being peer learning, makes the cooperation more horizontal, in line with the 2030 Agenda: it is demand-driven; it better attracts the attention of partner countries as it is based on exchanges of knowledge derived from experience. Thus, as the knowledge comes from expert staff from public institutions and administrations that have reacted to environment changes, it manages to better adapt to different contexts, and can build mutual trust between administrations. It fosters policy dialogue and reform through peer-to-peer exchanges and is well suited for building valuable networks of experts and policymakers in a cost-effective way. PSE can help to shape new mutually beneficial and more equal (peer-to-peer) partnerships between countries and makes a recognised contribution to all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Despite its multiple benefits, PSE still remains underused in the EU’s development cooperation. This study contributes to the public debate on a more strategic and wider use of PSE.** The study has been carried out in two phases. This analysis paper, the second phase of the study, builds on the findings and recommendations of Phase I (*Study on EU and its member states mobilising public sector expertise for development*, written by Esther Schneider and Carlos Illan), complementing them with a more policy-focused analysis of PSE at a European level.

**Foreign policy and other strategic objectives of EU member states, for which the SDGs are not always a prominent incentive for action, are major factors for mobilising PSE.** PSE can be valuable in promoting the EU and its member states’ standards, norms and values abroad. Domestic governments and senior civil servants may be attracted to PSE to foster the objectives of their administrations. Some countries base PSE activities on specialised expertise or a desire to expand their international reach, including on the economic front.

**The EU acts as a catalyst in mobilising European PSE.** This is because EU member states are interested in accessing EU funds to finance implementation of their bilateral political priorities. EU programmes lend a scale to international cooperation that most individual member states would struggle to achieve on their own and facilitate collaboration among them which otherwise would not take place. Certain member states are motivated by a desire to share their experiences of transition and accession to the EU and their positive national policy experiences, some of which they gained as part of the European project.

For the EU institutions, PSE helps operationalise the international partnerships approach. It adds value by supporting policy dialogue and reforms, and promoting EU values and interests

abroad. Approximation to EU standards and regulations remains an EU interest, although its attractiveness to third countries varies.

**Although ambitions for the scale of PSE vary, EU member states share an interest in making PSE more visible in EU external action and in using it more strategically under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe.** In the short term, ambitions will need to be calibrated, taking into account the operational constraints of EU member states presented in the Phase I study. PSE should be factored into NDICI programming at an early stage, so that it can be presented to partner countries early on. The involvement of implementing agencies (i.e. member states organisations) in the programming dialogue and mentioning PSE in programming and annual action documents for 2021-2027 would facilitate the use of PSE in practice. Involving member state organizations (MSO) in the dialogues with partner countries during the programming and implementation phases would also facilitate the use of PSE in practice, further ensuring that the knowledge of the public administrations mobilised is oriented towards development results, that is, towards the achievement of the accompanying public policy reform.

The EU's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA, former DG DEVCO) has now an expanded range of tools that now can be used globally, building on those once available to enlargement and neighbourhood countries or other selected countries only.

Under the NDICI, DG INTPA could continue to test and pilot PSE even more. In particular, PSE mobilisation could be used to complement many implementation modalities. The preference for joint programming under the NDICI and the EU's 'Team Europe' approach create more policy space for the 'working better together' and inclusiveness agendas, including for a strategic mobilisation of PSE. EU delegations can further facilitate cooperation at country level by including in future initiatives member states who indicate an interest but who may not be resident in the country.

**Although there is not a set formula to raise political support for PSE, ideas for promoting PSE have already been put forward.** PSE mobilisation has been limited so far, primarily due to operational constraints and the difficulty of mustering strong political backing in some EU member states. Decision-makers and administrators with an internal mandate in EU member states are crucial stakeholders in any future PSE constituency. The paper presents some ideas in that regard. For instance, they could:

- present success stories of European countries or public administrations that have engaged in PSE;
- showcase more strongly how PSE contributes to EU member states' and development objectives;
- raise awareness of the added value of PSE that support EU agendas;
- raise the visibility and added value of PSE for improving collaboration among EU member states and jointly with the EU institutions.

**The EU and member states should clarify their ambitions for PSE.**

The Phase I study signalled a shared interest among EU member states to learn from each other and establish a more structured dialogue on PSE. It also recommended working towards a common definition of PSE and its modalities. A better definition of European PSE would help clarify the European PSE offer to partner countries. At the same time, the idea of harmonising PSE approaches is politically unappealing and risks jeopardising Europe's real added value, namely its diversity and ability to respond to different demands from partner countries. Any shared guidance on European PSE would need to be enshrined in some form of guidance document and have the support of major players to have any standing.

To get the most out of PSE, the EU institutions and member states need to do their homework – both alone and together. The paper offers some **recommendations to help move the process forward**. Below we share some of them.

### **EU institutions could:**

- take into account the differing ambitions and capacities of EU member states when defining a more strategic European approach to cooperation through mobilising PSE;
- start considering and input PSE early in the programming process. Where appropriate, they could refer to mobilising PSE in different programming and implementation documents;
- continue testing the mobilisation of PSE, alone or as part of wider programmes, for example under the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+), as part of Team Europe initiatives and linked to budget support and policy dialogue;
- support the participation of all member states in EU programmes as part of the inclusiveness agenda, including through the role of EU delegations in ensuring member states' participation.

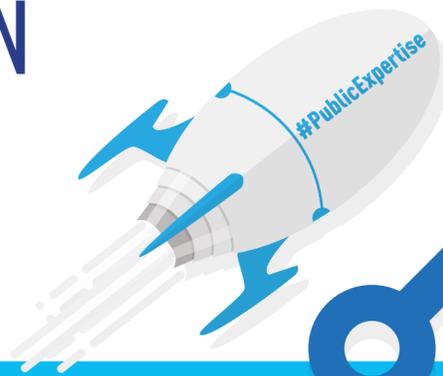
### **Member states could:**

- raise awareness in domestically-focused public administrations on the added value of PSE and its strategic importance for national or organisational objectives, and involve them in policy discussions about PSE;
- consider ways to improve incentives for mobilising public experts in PSE activities and compile best practices for dealing with administrative and legal problems;
- assess the need to establish coordination mechanisms for PSE and/or specialised agencies in Member States; including how to improve the combination of the Member States' national public administrations technical knowledge with the development knowledge of the Member States Organizations (MSOs).

### **Both EU institutions and member states could:**

- facilitate shared learning and collective data on PSE;
- consider developing and codifying a shared definition of European PSE that takes into account the variety of European experiences;
- commit to evaluating the impact of PSE in partner countries to promote learning and accountability in the use of PSE and to improve its effectiveness;
- provide information on how PSE can be 'plugged into' the EU's and member states' (joint) programming and the Team Europe initiatives.

# MAXIMISING THE **POTENTIAL OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXPERTISE** AS AN INNOVATIVE AND EFFICIENT WAY OF COOPERATION



## What is PSE?

It is the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the EU and its Member States' public institutions with partner countries, aiming at improving public policies and systems for people and the planet.



## ADVANTAGES



Peer-to-peer learning: horizontal cooperation



Demand-driven



Based on experience



Contributes to policy dialogue and generating partnerships

# How to integrate #PublicExpertise under the new International Partnerships approach of European development cooperation?



## MEMBER STATES

-  Present #PublicExpertise success stories
-  Showcase its impact on development
-  Make visible the positive impact for EU MS public systems
-  Raise awareness within MS public administrations on the added value of #PublicExpertise
-  Incentives for mobilizing public expertise
-  Compile best practices to overcome administrative, legal and operational challenges
-  Assess the role of Member State Organizations (MSOs) as coordination mechanism to assure PSE is oriented towards development results

## EU INSTITUTIONS

-  Add #PublicExpertise in the programming and implementation of NDICI-Global Europe and Team Europe Initiatives: #PolicyFirst
-  Test #PublicExpertise based ad hoc experiences or under larger programmes
-  Facilitate shared learning on PSE

