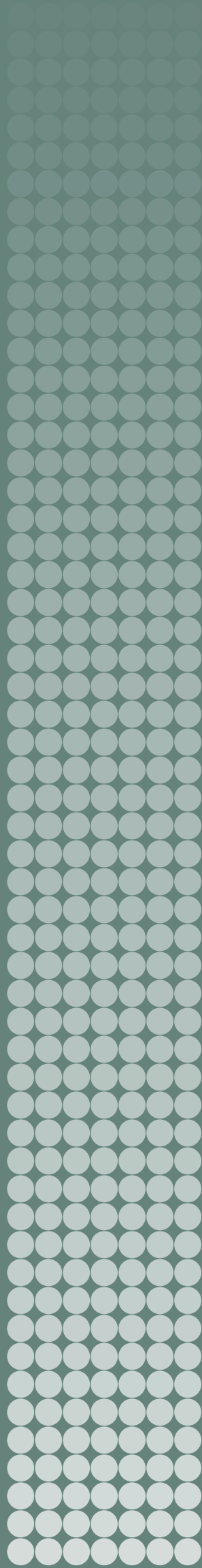


# EU MILITARY TRAINING MISSIONS: A SYNTHESIS REPORT

JAÏR VAN DER LIJN, VIRGINIE BAUDAIS,  
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**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL  
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## Summary

The European Union (EU) has deployed 37 civilian and military missions or operations since 2003. These include EU military training missions (EUTMs) in Somalia (EUTM Somalia, 2010–), Mali (EUTM Mali, 2013–), the Central African Republic (CAR) (EUTM RCA, 2016–) and, most recently, Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique, 2021–). Both EUTM RCA and EUTM Mali have suspended part of their training and other activities over the presence in both states of the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company.

EUTMs are not mandated to intervene directly in stabilization efforts, the prevention of conflict or the protection of civilians. Nonetheless, they are one of the EU's instruments in its integrated approach, and their overarching goal is to contribute to security sector reform (SSR) that enables and enhances EU partners' military capacities to deliver security within the rule of law, thereby contributing to the peace and security of populations. To this end, EUTMs support the set-up, restructuring and deployment of well-trained armed forces, and generally engage in training and providing advice on the reform of armed forces in order to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the defence sectors of partner countries.

This paper draws overarching conclusions based on a synthesis of previously published case studies that examine the impact of EUTMs in CAR, Mali and Somalia. The project used a framework developed by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). It concludes that EUTMs are relevant niche operations and, despite difficult circumstances beyond the control of the missions, their training and advisory efforts have increased the effectiveness of partner armed forces. While these gains have been marginal in CAR and Somalia, they have been more pronounced in Mali. Nonetheless, broader SSR and defence sector reform (DSR) efforts to improve the accountability and governance of defence and security sectors have become bogged down by: (a) a lack of political will and ownership on the part of host governments and other conflict parties; and (b) the EU's unwillingness to use its political weight to impose conditionalities as part of its programmes. EUTMs are generally mandated to implement largely technical and tactical agendas in contexts where the ongoing armed conflict and the politics of the security sector are not conducive to building professional national security forces. The main challenge is that SSR and DSR, including training, cannot be treated as technical processes due to their inherently political nature.

Six main limitations are identified as restricting the impact of the missions.

1. The inability of EUTMs and unwillingness of the EU to provide lethal equipment (and pay per diems, stipends and travel costs to trainees).
2. The absence of tracking and reporting systems for monitoring trainees after completion of their courses, including in terms of human rights, that are essential if courses and efforts are to be evaluated and adjusted.
3. The inability to mentor trainees in the field, and the resulting lack of evaluation and follow-up.
4. The high turnover of personnel and language problems, which reduce the ability of EUTMs to build institutional memory, improve situational awareness and build strong relations with counterparts.
5. Being headquartered in the capital, without (until recently) training facilities where stabilization efforts are taking place, which has increased

the distance between EUTMs and the situation and environment on the ground, particularly in Mali, but also in Somalia.

6. The limited application of the EU's integrated approach in which EUTMs are embedded in a carrot-and-stick strategy that combines security, development assistance and humanitarian aid, which means that, in isolation, EUTMs have limited leverage to make demands on accountability, inclusivity and human rights

At the same time, EUTMs find themselves caught in four interlinked and partially overlapping dilemmas: (a) national ownership versus international standards; (b) supporting challenging partners or leaving and allowing more destabilizing actors to step in; (c) EU clean hands versus the risk of others providing more harmful assistance; and (d) continuing a difficult long-term process involving setbacks and challenges or abandoning partners and losing international credibility.

Recent mandate renewals have begun to address some of these challenges in creative ways. Much of what is needed for EUTMs to be effective is already set out on paper. In practice, however, implementation needs to be further strengthened. This study makes seven partly overlapping recommendations to EU member states and EUTMs.

1. Embed EUTMs in a holistic approach that combines training, SSR and official development assistance, and is conditioned on inclusivity and human rights.
2. Consider providing non-lethal support but refrain from providing lethal equipment until conditions have been met.
3. Focus on missions' structural SSR/DSR efforts and on host governments' ownership and lead.
4. Improve coordination between EUTMs and host governments, ensure efforts are in line with operational reality and pay more attention to human rights, gender equality and other norms.
5. Establish tracking and follow-up mechanisms for trained soldiers.
6. Improve coordination among international partners engaged in SSR.
7. Invest in better strategic communications, as well as local and national stakeholder involvement.





## Acknowledgements

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## Abbreviations

AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DSR	Defence sector reform
EEAS	European Union External Action
EPF	European Peace Facility
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network
EU	European Union
EUTM	Military Training Mission
FACA	Forces Armées Centrafricaines, CAR Armed Forces
FAMA	Forces Armées Maliennes, Malian Armed Forces
G5 Sahel	Group of Five for the Sahel
JF-G5 Sahel	G5 Sahel Joint Force
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR
MINUSMA	UN Multi-Dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
SNA	Somali National Army
SSR	Security sector reform
WPS	Women, peace and security



# I. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has deployed 37 civilian and military missions or operations since 2003. Since 2009, these have been carried out in the context of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) within the framework set out in the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon. Under the 2016 Global Strategy, they are one of the various instruments through which the EU aims to enhance its own security and foster human security in an integrated approach.<sup>1</sup> There are currently 11 ongoing civilian missions and 7 military missions and operations. The latter include EU military training missions (EUTMs) in Somalia (EUTM Somalia, 2010–), Mali (EUTM Mali, 2013–), the Central African Republic (CAR) (EUTM RCA, 2016–) and, most recently, Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique, 2021–). Both EUTM RCA and EUTM Mali have suspended part of their training and other activities over the presence in both states of the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company.

EUTMs are not mandated to intervene directly in stabilization efforts, the prevention of conflict or the protection of civilians. Nonetheless, their overarching goal in supporting the set-up, restructuring and deployment of well-trained armed forces is to contribute to the peace and security of populations. In line with the EU Global Strategy, the aim is to deliver security sector reform (SSR) that enables and enhances EU partners' military capacities to deliver security within the rule of law. This is guided by an EU-wide strategic framework that supports SSR. EUTMs generally engage in training, and provide advice on the reform of armed forces in order to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the defence sectors of partner countries.<sup>2</sup>

The countries that contribute personnel to EUTMs cover the costs that they incur. Common costs were previously funded under the Athena mechanism. Since 2021, however, such costs not related to national contributions have been financed under the European Peace Facility (EPF). This combines funding for the common costs of CSDP military missions and operations with the costs of peace support operations by partner regional organizations, bilateral support to partner countries in military and defence matters and the most recent addition to the EU's toolbox, the provision of lethal and non-lethal equipment to partner countries. The EPF allows the EU to train and equip military partners as required, if there is agreement by all 27 EU member states.

This paper draws overarching conclusions based on a synthesis of previously published case studies that examined the impact of EUTMs in CAR, Mali and Somalia.<sup>3</sup> EUTM Mozambique began during the study and is not therefore discussed. The project used a framework developed by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON), a network of over 40 research partners from across the globe, to assess the impact of EUTMs in the field. The framework allows an assessment of the impact of a peace operation based on its ability to: (a) prevent armed conflict and sexual violence; (b) build confidence among local parties; (c) stabilize the area; (d) protect civilians; (e) strengthen public safety; (f) promote human rights; (g) contribute to peace dividends; (h) extend state authority; (i) support institution building and development;

<sup>1</sup> European Union External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016; and Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises, adopted by the European Council at its 3591st meeting held on 22 Jan. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> European Union External Action Service (note 1); and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for an EU wide strategic framework to support security sector reform, SWD(2016) 221 final, Strasbourg, 5 July 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, P. D. and Ali, H., *The European Union Training Mission in Somalia: An Assessment* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Nov. 2020); Hickendorff, A. and Acko, I., *The European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic: An Assessment* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Feb. 2021); and Baudais, V. and Maiga, S., *The European Union Training Mission in Mali: An Assessment* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Apr. 2022).

(*j*) reform the security sector; (*k*) promote the rule of law; and (*l*) support community policing and transitional justice. The framework assesses an operation's impact with reference to six explanatory factors: the primacy of politics; realistic mandates and matching resources; a people-centred approach; legitimacy and credibility; coordination and coherence; and promoting the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. The EPON framework was developed for all peace operations from large multidimensional missions to niche operations with more limited goals, such as EUTMs. It is able to examine the overall impact of EUTMs while keeping in mind their more targeted aims.

The case studies were based on a review of relevant primary and secondary sources, 113 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and 8 focus group discussions. Field research was conducted by in-country researchers in CAR (in 2020–21), Mali (in 2020–21) and Somalia (in 2020), before the suspension of training activities by EUTM RCA and EUTM Mali. All the focus groups were conducted with military officials, trainees and civil society participants, and most of the interviews were with local actors, such as civil society organization (CSO) representatives, researchers and officials from public authorities, ministries and members of the armed forces. The interviews with international stakeholders were mainly conducted by the lead author of each case study. Among the international stakeholders interviewed were representatives of the EUTMs and the parallel African Union (AU) and United Nations peace operations, Operation Barkhane and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel), and the EU delegations and the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), as well as international researchers. In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, local interviews and focus group meetings took place in accordance with local social distancing regulations, while interviews with international stakeholders were mostly carried out remotely. All the interviews and focus groups were conducted on the basis of non-attribution.

Chapter 2 briefly outlines the efforts and impacts of the three EUTMs under review. Chapter 3 reviews the above-mentioned explanatory factors for the impact of EUTMs on the basis of the findings of the case studies. Chapter 4 presents the main overarching conclusions, with a focus on the limitations and dilemmas faced. Finally, chapter 5 makes a number of recommendations aimed at EU member states and the EUTMs.

## 2. EUTMs and their results

Despite many difficult circumstances beyond the control of the missions, EUTM training and advisory efforts have generally marginally increased the effectiveness of armed forces. Broader security sector reform and defence sector reform (DSR) efforts to improve the accountability and governance of defence and security sectors have frequently had less impact. Nonetheless, EUTMs have a role to play.

### **EUTM Somalia**

EUTM Somalia is designed primarily to help build an effective Somali National Army (SNA) in the fight against the Islamist group Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen (Mujahedin Youth Movement, or al-Shabab). Its strategic objective is to increase ‘the proficiency, effectiveness, credibility and accountability of the Somali defence sector to enable Somali authorities to take over security responsibilities progressively’.<sup>4</sup> While its mandate initially focused on tactical training for individual recruits, strategic advice and mentoring were added to its tasks in 2013. In 2014 the mission moved operations from Uganda to Mogadishu, Somalia, and in 2016 it began training entire infantry units. In addition, its focus shifted to developing SNA command and control structures, and the capacity for national self-sufficiency. It has trained some 7000 trainees over 12 years, which represents a limited proportion of the total number of SNA personnel. Parallel programmes have been conducted by a range of other external actors, such as Eritrea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

EUTM Somalia has played a useful role in institution building, through the provision of strategic advice and capacity building; and in developing the Somali Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the SNA General Staff. Although EUTM Somalia has had only a minor impact on conflict dynamics in Somalia, that impact was generally regarded as positive by interviewees. The EU’s ability to track trainees on completion of their courses has improved in recent years, by coordinating with the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and other partner countries. However, there is no mechanism for such tracking, or one for advising and mentoring trainees after their deployment. Nor is there any way to assess or evaluate trainees, or monitor attrition in the field. Only after 2016, when EUTM Somalia began to generate light infantry units, was any connection established with SNA operations in the field. These efforts first paid off operationally in 2019, when EUTM Somalia-trained units were used in Operation Badbaado, a joint Somali-AMISOM operation to extend state authority in various strategic settlements in the Lower Shabelle region.

EUTM Somalia’s courses may also have had a small, indirectly positive impact on the protection of civilians, the human rights environment and preventing conflict-related sexual violence, as SNA trainees were trained in international humanitarian law, human rights law and the prevention of sexual violence.

### **EUTM Mali**

The first strategic objective of EUTM Mali is to support the restoration of the military capability of the Malian Armed Forces (Forces Armées Maliennes, FAMA) ‘with a view to enabling them to conduct military operations aiming at restoring Malian territorial integrity and reducing the threat posed by terrorist groups’.<sup>5</sup> EUTM Mali’s mandate initially focused on technical and tactical training and capacity-building activities,

<sup>4</sup> European Union Training Mission Somalia, ‘Factsheet’, Updated Aug. 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Council decision 2013/34/CFSP, 17 Jan. 2013; and Council decision 2014/220/CFSP, 15 Apr. 2014.

as well as advising the FAMA at different levels on various issues such as doctrine, human resource management, information management systems and intelligence. Its efforts have also involved ‘train the trainers’ courses and capacity-building activities designed to deliver a sustainable Malian-owned training programme.

Training sessions for reintegrated members of signatory armed groups were included in the context of the 2015 Bamako Agreement, and these training activities were decentralized. Thus, in 2016 EUTM Mali’s area of operations was extended to the River Niger loop, which includes the cities of Gao and Timbuktu. The mission also began to provide support to the G5 Sahel; and, in 2018, this support was expanded as a second strategic objective to include training and advice to operationalize the G5 Sahel Joint Force (JF-G5 Sahel). In 2020 the mission’s area of operation was expanded still further to the whole of Mali and beyond, as EUTM Mali was tasked with providing military training and advice to the JF-G5 Sahel and the national armed forces of Burkina Faso and Niger. Since 2020, its mandate has also included ‘mentoring, through non-executive accompaniment up to the tactical level’ to monitor the performance and behaviour of the FAMA.<sup>6</sup> However, although some permanent and temporary engagements have taken place at different levels, such executive accompaniment has never taken place in combat operations.

The drivers of the conflict have evolved since 2013, and it now affects the whole of the central Sahel, which increases the challenges posed by terrorism, migration and trafficking. On 18 August 2020, the continuing degradation of the security situation and growing opposition to the civilian regime led to a military coup d’état, which again exposed the vulnerability of the country to the military taking on governance roles.

The challenges faced by EUTM Mali cannot be overstated. There is insufficient political will among the Malian government to implement political and institutional reform, including that of the defence and security sectors. The lack of trust between the signatories of the 2015 Bamako Agreement combined with political instability increase the difficulties of implementing the mission’s mandate. Initiatives that aim to enhance governance and the fight against corruption meet with particular resistance. Consequently, the FAMA is not yet the inclusive, effective, well-equipped and responsible armed force envisaged in EUTM Mali’s strategic objectives.

In addition, a single session devoted to human rights and gender issues in the courses seems insufficient to change the behaviour of trainees, although most of those interviewed believed that their attitude to human rights had improved. The FAMA is regularly accused of human rights violations and is at times itself a source of insecurity and an obstacle to sustainable peace.

It is not clear exactly how many Malian soldiers have received training from EUTM Mali or other international actors, as there is no database to monitor these activities. However, the mission’s efforts in training an estimated 15–16 000 personnel appear to have had a positive impact at the operational level, and to have helped to improve the state of readiness of the FAMA, which is better able to repel attacks by armed groups. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and the military coups d’état of 2020 and 2021 have delayed planned efforts. The number of soldiers trained and the relatively good relationships established with the FAMA and the MOD, at least until recently, have been the mission’s major successes. Achievement of its strategic objectives, however, will be a long-term effort, and one that is dependent on future security and political developments in the region.

Following completion of the research for this study and after the 2021 coup d’état, the relationship between the transitional Malian government, France and several European countries deteriorated, in part over the presence of the Wagner Group.

<sup>6</sup> Council decision 2020/434/CFSP, 23 Mar. 2020.



French forces and the European Taskforce Takuba are to be withdrawn from Mali to Niger, and EUTM Mali will recalibrate its activities on the most sensitive issues. As the junta was unable to guarantee that EUTM Mali trainees would be kept distant from Wagner Group staff, a resizing of the mission and the suspension of training activities in particular were deemed necessary. EU member states do not unanimously favour withdrawal, however, and are currently awaiting the results and outcome of the ongoing mid-term strategic review.<sup>7</sup>

### **EUTM RCA**

EUTM RCA is supporting the CAR authorities to re-establish the CAR Armed Forces (Forces Armées Centrafricaines, FACA), while instability is ongoing due to the presence of the alliance (Séléka) of armed groups and of anti-balaka ('anti-machete') self-defence armed groups. Its mandate is to assist with DSR and to support the development of a 'modernised, effective and democratically accountable' FACA.<sup>8</sup> EUTM RCA provides strategic advice on DSR, education for the FACA's commissioned and non-commissioned officers and specialists, and operational training for FACA units and their leaders, new recruits, individual specialists and reintegrated members of armed groups. The concept of training the trainers is used to strengthen the FACA's capacity to develop its own education and training systems. The 2020–22 mission plan foresees an expansion of the mission area beyond the capital, Bangui, and the town of Bouar in western CAR, to N'délé in the north and Bangassou in the south, as well as the establishment of mobile units to support the deployment of the FACA throughout the country.<sup>9</sup>

There was broad agreement among the interviewees about the importance of EUTM RCA's efforts in the area of military capacity building. Over 7000 FACA personnel have attended its training and education courses. On completion, soldiers have often been sent directly into the field to contribute to the stabilization of the country. Given the current absence of monitoring systems, EUTM RCA has had difficulty objectively measuring its human rights implementation and other impacts. Thus far, there has been little tangible progress with the FACA's overarching transformation. The mission has successfully assisted the MOD to re-establish a human resources system and streamline the retirement process, and to draft broader policies on structural reform. However, many of these documents and policies await implementation.

The FACA is still far from being an inclusive, effective, well-functioning and democratically accountable armed force, able to address security challenges outside Bangui without the support of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA). Moreover, the FACA remains a possible threat to stability through the instrumentalization of soldiers for internal political or ethnicized purposes, human rights violations, defections to armed groups and even the risk of a military coup d'état. Arguably, however, such a radical transformation could not have been expected within a timespan of just four years, and EUTM RCA has faced many obstacles that were largely beyond its control.

Following completion of the field research for this study, reports emerged in November 2021 that most of the FACA units deployed, including at least one EU-trained

<sup>7</sup> Al Jazeera, 'France, European allies announce military withdrawal from Mali', 17 Feb. 2022; and EURACTIV France and AFP, 'Mali: l'UE va «recalibrer» ses missions, selon Josep Borrell' [Mali: The EU will 'recalibrate' its missions, according to Josep Borrell], 28 Mar. 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L104/21, 19 Apr. 2016.

<sup>9</sup> European Union External Action Service (EEAS), 'European Union Training Mission in Central African Republic (EUTM RCA)', Fact sheet, 1 Oct. 2020; EUTM RCA official 2, Written communication with the author, 31 Aug. 2020; and EEAS official 1, Interview with the author, 7 Jan. 2021.

battalion, were operating under the direct command or supervision of the Wagner Group.<sup>10</sup> In response, the EU Political and Security Committee decided to suspend EUTM RCA's training and education activities on 30 November. However, the mission continues to provide strategic advice to the CAR MOD and the FACA.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> European Union External Action Service (EEAS), 'Political and strategic environment of CSDP missions in the Central African Republic (CAR)', Working document, 15 Nov. 2021, EEAS(2021)1213.

<sup>11</sup> Reuters, 'EU suspends military training in Central Africa over Russian mercenaries', 15 Dec. 2021.

### 3. Explanatory factors behind the level of impact of EUTMs

#### Political primacy

In all three host countries, the EUTMs have had to deal with high levels of political uncertainty over key strategic issues, such as the lack of an agreed national security architecture, and the lack of political reconciliation and a viable peace process. The fragmented political landscapes in these countries have meant that advisory activities were not tied directly to a commonly agreed strategic vision of the armed forces and the national security architecture. Mistrust directed at international actors further limited the space for international support. Under such conditions, and given their limited mandates, the EUTMs could not wield much political authority compared to other peace operations and external actors. This is particularly the case in Somalia, where the EU plays a less prominent role compared to Turkey and the USA. In CAR and Mali, the growing influence of Russia is a source of tension between the host governments and the EU and its member states.

Host governments generally do not share essential information about their human resources strategies or the deployment of trainees. EUTMs have no say in the selection of trainees, which makes the vetting conducted by MINUSCA and the UN Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) particularly important for ensuring that trainees have not committed human rights violations. At times, international training programmes have competed for the best recruits. Furthermore, missions are not in a strong position to question proposals from national armed forces headquarters, which appear to prioritize ad hoc operations over attendance at training, and the fast operationalization of forces over the fundamental, long-term transformation of security governance. While the EUTMs were praised by interviewees for their assistance with drafting SSR/DSR policies, most of these policies are yet to be implemented. SSR/DSR processes seem to be predominantly externally driven and EUTMs have little political influence beyond the drafting stage.

As such, EUTMs have had to implement largely technical and tactical agendas in contexts where the politics of the security sector have not been conducive to building professional national security forces. SSR and DSR, including training, are inherently political and cannot be treated as technical processes. The EU has generally been reluctant to wield political conditionality in all three host countries. Only in December 2021 did EUTM RCA suspend its training activities until the host government could guarantee that EUTM-trained units would not be placed under the command or supervision of the Wagner Group.<sup>12</sup> The arrival of the Wagner Group in Mali at the end of 2021 also led to a recalibration and suspension of many EUTM Mali activities in March 2022.<sup>13</sup>

EUTMs do not make a clear set of demands or set conditions on training. Unlike states such as the USA, which regularly impose such conditions and explicit ‘red lines’, the EU does not take a carrot-and-stick approach. This could, however, be precisely what is needed to build professional security forces and structures with high levels of respect for human rights and low levels of corruption.

<sup>12</sup> Valade, C., ‘RCA: l’UE reprendra la formation des FACA si elles ne sont pas «employées» par Wagner’ [CAR: The EU will resume FACA training if they are not “employed” by Wagner], RFI, 4 Feb. 2022.

<sup>13</sup> EURACTIV France and AFP (note 7).

### **Mandates and resources**

The mandates of the EUTMs both reflect and reinforce the limits of what is politically possible. EUTMs have no mandate to supply lethal equipment. Nor can they pay per diems or stipends—or even cover the travel costs—of their trainees. These were among the main complaints of trainees and instructors in all three cases. All this reduces the effectiveness and the political impact of the missions in comparison with other international security assistance programmes. Since 2021, however, the EPF has enabled the Council of the European Union to authorize the transfer of military and defence-related equipment, including lethal equipment, to the armed forces of partner countries, including through CSDP missions. Alternatively, EU member states can provide bilateral support, but this has not always been tailored to the needs of EUTM counterparts or aligned with EUTM efforts. In addition, while adequate equipment is an essential requirement for successful security operations, its provision presents ethical dilemmas and potential dangers. In the absence of an advanced SSR process and a functioning defence governance structure, reinforcing armed forces increases the risk of human rights abuses against the population, the use of the army for political gain or military coups d'état. These concerns have led a number of EU member states thus far to withhold their authorization for the use of the EPF to provide lethal assistance to CAR, Mali and Somalia.

None of the missions has access to a tracking and reporting system, either host government-owned or its own, that indicates where trainees are deployed having completed their courses, or whether trainees have been decommissioned or defected. This impedes monitoring and evaluation, and, where relevant, the calibration of efforts, including to deal with controversial issues such as human rights violations. This is important given that problematic behaviour by FACA, FAMA and SNA troops, which has included human rights violations, gender-based violence and extortion, is still a major issue. In CAR, Mali and Somalia, the EUTMs must make do with information provided by the respective UN peace operations, but their reports do not provide a clear picture of developments over time or of whether the perpetrators of human rights violations are EUTM trainees.

In the absence of a tracking and reporting system—and thus the ability to follow-up and mentor trainees in the field, and thereby evaluate the impact of their training—the narrow focus of EUTMs on training and advising means that missions are forced to adopt a partial ‘train-and-release’ approach. In CAR and Mali, the EUTMs have relied on the UN to monitor and track the performance and behaviour of the armed forces deployed in the field. However, this is not possible for individual trainees. Moreover, although MINUSCA is authorized to accompany EU-trained units, the mission is already overstretched. For EUTMs to mentor trainees would require mandate changes, additional resources and a reconfiguration of mission force postures. Furthermore, for EUTMs to take on mentoring tasks would massively increase the support burden on missions in areas such as medical evacuation, force protection, and forward repair and recovery of vehicles. It would also involve contributing countries assuming significantly higher risks for their personnel, which many have thus far been unwilling to do.

The new EUTM RCA mission plan seeks to address the limited ability to monitor and mentor using detachments of personnel in the four FACA garrisons and by establishing mobile units, but none of this has yet been put in place. The suspension of training activities since December 2021 seems likely to affect implementation of the mission plan. Similarly, EUTM Mali's 2020 mandate includes ‘mentoring, through non-executive accompaniment up to the tactical level’ to monitor the performance and behaviour of the FAMA. EUTM Somalia is still to establish a feedback mechanism

to monitor training results in the field. CAR, Mali and Somalia's near-permanent deployment of their armed forces in operations, without room for training and rest in their operational cycles (operation–rest–training), presents a further impediment to follow-up. Given the levels of insecurity in all three host countries, the governments prioritize combat over training, including in the allocation of financial resources.

### *Resources*

Furthermore, while EUTMs do not face financial constraints, they do face challenges linked to human resources and a high turnover of personnel. The missions' four- to six-month rotations risk undermining operational continuity, as they do not allow missions to develop local expertise, hinder the establishment of sustainable relationships with local counterparts and prevent the building of institutional knowledge and memory. This has a particular impact on the effectiveness of EUTM advisors, which depends to a large extent on relationships and mutual trust, and the consistency and overall coherence of the advisory role. In addition, EUTMs depend on personnel from the EU member states. The CAR and Mali missions suffer from difficulties generating enough qualified French-speaking personnel to meet force requirements. In addition, a substantial number of trainees are illiterate or lack basic knowledge of French, which obstructs the transfer of knowledge and skills. In Somalia, language barriers remain a challenge even though the mission has hired interpreters.

The way in which EUTM Mali was set up and headquartered presents an additional challenge. Although it aims to contribute to the FAMA stabilization efforts in central Mali and the Gao and Timbuktu regions, it is headquartered in Bamako. Until recently, its training activities were solely conducted in Koulikoro, and only since 2016 have mobile training teams had the opportunity to travel outside Bamako to provide training at the FAMA's decentralized bases. Under its most recent mandate, EUTM Mali has initiated a major rebasing project, notably with the establishment of an EU training facility in Sévaré. To carry out such decentralized activities at FAMA facilities, however, EUTM Mali depends on logistical support from MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane, and on Barkhane and Taskforce Takuba to provide feedback. Malian government officials and trainees have argued that EUTM staff are insufficiently familiar with the reality on the ground, and that training activities need to be further adapted to the FAMA's operational environment. Nonetheless, the de facto reconfiguration and regionalization of the mission, and the accompanying increase in the budget following the most recent mandate renewal, reflect the fact that Liptako-Gourma is now the most conflict-affected region.

### **A people-centred approach**

The narrow EUTM mandates to train and advise mean that the missions are not directly centred on the needs of local populations; they mostly engage directly with key leaders in their respective defence ministries and armed forces, and with other international partners attempting to stabilize host countries. However, their focus on developing well-trained and disciplined armed forces is thought to contribute to the stabilization of countries, and to securing and protecting populations. The missions' training and advice on human rights might reduce the likelihood of armed forces abusing local populations, but the attention given to this aspect was generally considered too limited by the stakeholders interviewed for this study. EUTMs were said to enable little involvement by trainees or local and national stakeholders, including civil society, in the setting up and implementation of efforts, and to have only limited engagement with local communities through outreach or strategic communication

activities, even though this would not require a formal mandate. Consequently, mission personnel do not always have an in-depth understanding of the local context. At the same time, mission objectives, target groups, activities and limitations are insufficiently communicated to national stakeholders, which leads to mistrust and misunderstandings. These are major challenges, as the long-term impact of advice and military capacity building depends on a commitment by national stakeholders to own and lead the SSR/DSR process.

### **Legitimacy and credibility**

EUTMs are generally perceived as legitimate and credible missions by both international actors and national authorities. This stems from their presence at the invitation of host governments and generally being authorized by the UN Security Council. The EU also has a reputation as a major development partner and provider of humanitarian assistance with a long-term commitment and an integrated approach. Nonetheless, national stakeholders' knowledge of EUTMs, their mandates and their restrictions is generally limited. This lack of familiarity has been actively used by politicians in CAR, Mali and Somalia to shift the focus away from the government's lack of will to implement structural reform, and to deflect blame for the dysfunctional state of their armed forces. Consequently, those citizens in CAR, in particular, who know about the EUTM tend to perceive the mission as the latest iteration of French interference in their internal affairs.

The active engagement of EUTMs in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and SSR processes in the context of peace processes also risks resentment among local populations. For example, EUTM RCA has trained instructors for the Special Mixed Security Units (Unités Spéciales Mixtes de Sécurité, USMS), which integrate armed opposition groups into the FACA, while parts of the population in CAR would have preferred to see members of those groups prosecuted. Any resumption of training activities by EUTM RCA could also undermine the credibility of the EU as a security actor with principles and conditions. EUTM Mali's credibility has also been challenged by the suspension of many of its activities due to violent attacks, the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020 coup d'état.

In both CAR and Mali, trainees and government officials complained that EUTMs impose a European reform model on a foreign-owned process, with too little openness to listening to recipients' perspectives. There is a perception, particularly among trainees, that the missions have a paternalistic or even condescending attitude, and lack sufficient understanding of historical and cultural contexts. Particularly in Mali, many of the trainees and FAMA officials interviewed did not always see the nature of the training as adapted to the Malian context or meeting Malian needs. Between 2012—particularly in the mission planning and set-up stages—and 2020, Malian government officials and trainees perceived that there was too little consultation and information sharing. As the conflict changed, so too did their needs, and training programmes were said to be insufficiently flexible or adaptable to provide tailor-made solutions. Interviewees claimed to have frequently asked for a more balanced partnership; and this frustration was said to have led the FAMA to push for more training the trainers activities, but also to have contributed to a decreased interest in EUTM Mali training courses, particularly throughout 2019.<sup>14</sup> Since the 2020 coup d'état, however, the common military background of the military leadership and EUTM Mali staff was said by interviewees to be facilitating a more common understanding of the challenges.

<sup>14</sup> Hellquist, E. and Sandman, T., *Synergies between Military Missions in Mali* (FOI: Stockholm, 2020), p. 15.

### **Coordination and coherence**

Poor strategic coordination among different EU activities has at times undermined the EU's overall impact. It has been difficult for EUTM Somalia to deliver a unified effort together with EUCAP Somalia, the EU Naval Force Somalia, the EU delegation in Somalia and the relevant EU departments in Brussels. In CAR and Mali, this internal coordination appears to work more smoothly.

Ensuring strategic coordination and coherence is even more difficult with non-EU partners. All three missions are part of complex constellations of multilateral peace and other operations that are complemented by other bilateral security sector-focused efforts. EUTMs address a relevant niche in terms of international efforts. The main challenge concerning coherence is that EUTMs focus narrowly on training and advice without having the requisite capabilities to engage in subsequent monitoring and evaluation or mentoring of their trainees in the field. Although this could be resolved through closer collaboration with other international partners engaged in training and advising security sectors, this might not necessarily be the case.

EUTMs are not key players in international coordination efforts, but they do attend all existing meeting forums and coordination mechanisms as either participants or observers. In such meetings, each partner comes with its own approach based on its own mandate. While they do not plan activities together but try to align activities to avoid duplication, in practice there are varying levels of coordination. In Somalia, EUTM Somalia generally coordinates best with other Western actors (the UK and the USA), somewhat less effectively with AMISOM and Turkey, and had little or no communication with the United Arab Emirates' now defunct training programme and the more secretive Eritrean training programmes. In CAR, coordination is best with France and the USA, and is fraught with tensions with MINUSCA. The formal EUTM RCA position on the Wagner Group is that an EU mission cannot collaborate with private military companies, especially when they are responsible for human rights violations—and, since the start of the war in Ukraine, particularly when this involves Russian actors. The only actor able to coordinate, prioritize human rights and international humanitarian law in activities, and deconflict the approaches of Wagner Group instructors is the host government, but it chooses not to do so. In Mali, EUTM Mali's position on the Wagner Group is identical. Coordination is good with France and other EU member states, and relations with MINUSMA, JF-G5 Sahel and Barkhane have improved over time. Although partners do not plan activities together, they try to align them to avoid duplication. As formal information-sharing processes between different missions are often difficult, the most efficient way of channelling information in CAR and Mali is said to be through French officers in the missions.

### **The women, peace and security agenda**

On paper, mainstreaming gender equality and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 are guiding principles of all EU CSDP operations. In practice, however, there is still room for the WPS agenda to be better integrated into EUTM activities, and only limited time and resources are allocated in training activities. This is partly driven by local political contexts. In addition, the number of women personnel deployed by contributing states is limited, leading to a de facto low level of representation of women in EUTMs. Nonetheless, improvements have been made. The appointment of gender advisors has positively contributed to the context-sensitive inclusion of gender perspectives. Gender and gender-related protection issues, such as the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, are now components of all the missions' analyses, advice and training.

## 4. Conclusions

EUTMs are relevant niche operations engaged in training and advising the armed forces and defence ministries of partner countries in order to strengthen their effectiveness, accountability and governance. However, they are generally mandated to implement largely technical and tactical agendas in contexts where the ongoing armed conflict and the politics of the security sector are not conducive to building professional national security forces. The main challenge is that SSR and DSR, including training, cannot be treated as technical processes due to their inherently political nature.

Despite difficult circumstances beyond the control of the missions, EUTM training and advisory efforts have increased the effectiveness of their armed forces. While these gains have been marginal in CAR and Somalia, they have been a bit more pronounced in Mali. Unfortunately, broader SSR and DSR efforts to improve the accountability and governance of defence and security sectors have become bogged down by: (a) a lack of political will and ownership on the part of the host government and other conflict parties; and (b) the EU's unwillingness to use its political weight to impose conditionalities as part of its programmes.

### Limitations

The EUTMs in CAR, Mali and Somalia have all delivered useful training, but their impact has been reduced by the limits to their mandates and human resources. This study identifies six main limitations that are restricting the impact of the missions.

1. The inability until recently of EUTMs, and since 2021 for legitimate reasons the unwillingness of the EU, to provide lethal equipment (and pay per diems, stipends and travel costs to trainees) reduces the effectiveness of missions.
2. The absence of tracking and reporting systems for monitoring trainees after completion of their courses leaves EUTMs unaware of the whereabouts and behaviour of trainees, including in terms of human rights, which is required if courses and efforts are to be evaluated and adjusted.
3. The inability to mentor trainees in the field, and the resulting lack of evaluation and follow-up, forces EUTMs to adopt a partial train and release approach.
4. The high turnover of personnel and language problems reduce the ability of EUTMs to build institutional memory, improve situational awareness and build strong relations with counterparts.
5. Particularly in Mali, but also in Somalia, being headquartered in the capital, without (until recently) training facilities where stabilization efforts are taking place has increased the distance between EUTMs and the situation and environment on the ground.
6. The limited application of the EU's integrated approach in which EUTMs are embedded in a carrot-and-stick strategy that combines security, development assistance and humanitarian aid instruments means that, on their own, EUTMs have limited leverage to make demands on accountability, inclusivity and human rights.



Although these mandate- and human resources-related limitations could be mitigated through close collaboration with parallel multilateral peace and other operations and bilateral efforts, EUTMs struggle to coordinate with other international partners engaged in training and advising security sectors. The Wagner Group is a particular challenge not only because, formally as a matter of principle, the EU does not collaborate with private military companies, but particularly in this case because it is a Russian company allegedly involved in serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, and it contributes to the further destabilization of the host countries. At the same time, however, EUTMs could be better grounded in the host countries that they aim to support. As a result of their limited strategic communications efforts, the unfamiliarity of local populations with EUTMs has been actively used by politicians to deflect blame for the dysfunctionality of their armed forces. National partners in CAR and Mali also tend to perceive EUTMs as neo-colonial or Western tools. This is reinforced by the perceptions of trainees and government officials, who at times have complained that EUTMs impose a European reform model with little openness to recipients' perspectives. Collaboration with civil society has been limited. Such perceptions and the limited local and national anchoring of EUTM efforts are highly relevant as the sustainability of advice and military capacity-building activities depends on national stakeholder commitments to own and lead SSR/DSR processes. Last but not least, although gender issues and human rights are now components of all three missions' analyses, advice and training activities, the attention given to these topics still leaves a lot of space for expansion.

## **Dilemmas**

Despite the fact that the EUTMs in CAR, Mali and Somalia have all delivered some useful results, they find themselves caught up in a series of interlinked and partially overlapping dilemmas. This study has identified four major dilemmas.

### *1. National ownership versus international standards*

Effective training and sustainable SSR efforts require national ownership. Neither should be perceived as externally driven with insufficient local and national input. Nor can the effects last unless embedded in broader civil society and governance reform. While growth of national ownership is often needed, this is frequently a difficult balancing act. National stakeholders may have less interest in international standards, and human rights and international humanitarian law may be perceived as secondary to winning the war. Moreover, strengthening armed forces could also increase the risk of coups d'état, particularly if training efforts are not embedded in a broader SSR process. This dilemma has only deepened in Mali since the coup d'état.

### *2. Supporting challenging partners versus leaving and allowing more destabilizing actors to step in*

EUTMs build the capacity of armed forces in their struggle against non-state armed groups. However, these opponents of the state often thrive on the legitimate grievances of local populations, for whom the national armed forces have often been more of a source of insecurity than security. Nonetheless, while these armed forces have often been part of the problem and unconditional support for them would be unhelpful, not supporting them would perhaps be even more harmful, as that might lead to victories for jihadist groups in Mali and Somalia, and a return to power of Séléka groups in CAR.

### *3. EU clean hands versus the risk of others providing more harmful assistance*

EUTMs are deployed in an environment of growing geopolitical competition. Host governments are increasingly able to shop around for military support. Generally, these alternative partners are pursuing different and not necessarily equally positive approaches. This is obviously clear in the case of the Wagner Group in CAR and Mali, where it has outright abused human rights and violated international humanitarian law. However, albeit to a lesser extent, Turkey and the USA are also following more securitized and militarized methods in Somalia. Consequently, choosing not to provide support or limiting certain kinds of support could not only provide access to less demanding donors, but also decrease any remaining leverage the EU possesses.

### *4. Continuing a difficult long-term process with setbacks and challenges versus abandoning partners and losing international credibility*

While there are many challenges and risks attached to supporting armed forces that engage in human rights violations or carry out coups d'état, not least credibility loss over adherence to its own principles, closing the EUTMs in CAR, Mali and Somalia could also result in a loss of credibility for the EU. It could be seen as the EU abandoning these countries and might arguably affect the EU's status as a credible international partner. On the other hand, it could also increase the EU's credibility to be acting on its own conditionalities, and potentially discredit the respective host nations for not playing their part in creating the conditions required for success.

Recent mandate renewals have begun to address some of these challenges in creative ways. In CAR, there is now monitoring and mentoring by detachments of personnel at four garrisons and mobile units have been established. In Mali 'mentoring, through non-executive accompaniment up to the tactical level' has been included in the mandate since 2013, and the establishment of an EU training facility in Sévaré and of decentralized activities in FAMA facilities throughout the country could help to align the mission more to needs in the field. These examples are important steps to further increase the effectiveness of EUTMs. In CAR and Mali, the increasing role of the Wagner Group may have changed the geopolitical environment more structurally, leading the EU to weigh up the choices contained in these dilemmas in a different way.

## 5. Recommendations

Much of what is needed for EUTMs to be effective is already set out on paper, particularly in the Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises and the EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform. In practice, however, implementation still needs to be strengthened. In order to improve the effectiveness of EUTMs, this study makes seven partly overlapping recommendations to EU member states and to EUTMs.

### *1. Embed EUTMs in a holistic approach that combines training, SSR and official development assistance, and is conditioned on inclusivity and human rights*

On paper the EU has, in line with its 2016 Global Strategy, developed an integrated approach.<sup>15</sup> In practice, integration requires further development and implementation. Any decision to support national armed forces in countries such as CAR, Mali and Somalia cannot be unconditional. The EU's conditions have so far mainly been strong on paper. From an accountability perspective, however, it could be stricter and should not be seen as supporting human rights violations. The EU is in a position to be stricter as it is far too important a player in all three host countries to be ignored, in terms of both military support and development or humanitarian assistance. At the same time, host governments still hope to get a better deal. The training courses provided by EUTMs are not necessarily the kind wanted by the national security elites, as they would often prefer to see much tougher training, and the EPF has not yet been used to provide them with lethal assistance. This means there is room for the EU to further strengthen its integrated approach into a strategy in which it applies all the security, development and humanitarian instruments available in a carrot-and-stick approach. If the EU were to better combine the instruments it applies, it would be in a much better position to make demands on human rights and inclusivity. This could also mean that national security elites get more of what they ask for in terms of military training and lethal equipment under the EPF—once EU conditions on human rights implementation and inclusivity have been met. Thus, the suspension of training by EUTM RCA is a first step by the EU to demonstrate that it is setting conditions on its efforts.

### *2. Consider providing non-lethal support but refrain from providing lethal equipment until conditions have been met*

The provision of equipment for trainees is an option under the EPF. However, doing harm needs to be avoided at all costs. Since EU-provided lethal equipment could be used in human rights violations, to consolidate political power or in a military coup d'état, EU member states should first consider investing more in non-lethal equipment, such as strengthening the logistical capacity of the host country's armed forces. It could also be beneficial for the armed forces' functioning and morale to invest in communications systems and provide trainees with uniforms. It is essential that the supply of any lethal equipment is subject to strict conditions, such as a human rights due diligence policy, safeguards to guarantee compliance with the criteria on exports of military technology and equipment defined in Common Position 944, a track-and-trace system for personnel and equipment, and implementation of SSR/DSR policies that ensure transparent and accountable governance of the security and defence sector.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> European Union External Action Service (note 1); and Council Conclusions (note 1).

<sup>16</sup> Council Decision 2019/1560/CFSP of 16 Sep. 2019 amending Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment, *Official Journal of the European Union*,

### *3. Focus on missions' structural SSR/DSR efforts and on host governments' ownership and lead*

In line with the European Parliament's resolution of 16 September 2020 on EU-African security cooperation in the Sahel region, West Africa and the Horn of Africa, EUTMs should prioritize the longer-term, sustainable transformation of security governance, 'which has human security at its centre and puts the security needs of the entire population at the heart of all components', over their current focus on shorter-term tactical and operational objectives.<sup>17</sup> EUTMs should particularly focus on enhancing command-and-control structures, the implementation of democratic oversight, and the application of military justice. They should ensure that national ownership of and the national leads on SSR/DSR processes are at the core of these activities. Moreover, the EU delegations and EUTMs should leverage their position to encourage governments to embrace their leading roles and commit to medium- and long-term SSR and DSR objectives, including the translation of draft policy documents into tangible reforms.

### *4. Improve coordination between EUTMs and host governments, ensure efforts are in line with operational reality and pay more attention to human rights, gender equality and other norms*

Host governments and the leaderships of their armed forces frequently express a wish to be more involved in the definition of EUTM objectives and in the organization of training activities. The courses are often perceived as too based on European expertise and should increasingly include national expertise. There is a need to further expand host government roles in defining training activities and to increase the focus on training the trainers courses to facilitate the transfer of capability wherever possible. This might also mean that, in line with the September 2020 call by the European Parliament, EUTM activities need to be further adjusted to evolving conflict dynamics and operational realities.<sup>18</sup> In Mali, in particular, contributing to the implementation of the 2015 Bamako Agreement is still essential, but no longer sufficient. There is a need to deal with the breakdown of the social contract throughout the country and the jihadist groups that thrive on this. At the same time, it is essential that training courses further increase attention on human rights, international humanitarian law, gender equality and women's rights. In particular, the WPS agenda should be higher up the agenda and mainstreamed into mission activities.

### *5. Establish tracking and follow-up mechanisms for trained soldiers*

Although EUTMs generally have limited mandates, in line with the September 2020 call by the European Parliament they should, together with host governments, be enabled to select trainees, and track and monitor the performance of trained cohorts deployed in the field.<sup>19</sup> The currently insufficient follow-up and absence of proper feedback mechanisms are important limitations that prevent EUTMs from assessing the commitment and behaviour of trainees during operations, including with regard to human rights and international humanitarian law. At the very least, EUTMs should apply more pressure on host governments to share essential information about their human resources planning and the whereabouts and performance of trainees. EUTMs should track trainees, debrief them on their return from field missions and select key members of staff, such as commanders, for more intensive mentoring. Debriefings

L239/16, 17 Sep. 2019.

<sup>17</sup> European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 16 Sep. 2020 on EU-African security cooperation in the Sahel region, West Africa, and the Horn of Africa, 2020/2002/INI, 16 Sep. 2020.

<sup>18</sup> European Parliament (note 17).

<sup>19</sup> European Parliament (note 17).

should not only allow the mission to know where trained staff are deployed, but also help to identify deficiencies and skills gaps during operations and then integrate the lessons learned into future training. This will also allow the mission to provide trained troops with ongoing refresher courses, ideally led by national trainers and mentors. Setting up small-scale follow-up and mentoring mechanisms—such as those in EUTM RCA—or including the non-executive accompaniment of trained units—as in EUTM Mali’s most recent mandate—are important first steps. Alternatively, involving contractors in such tasks could be considered. Adding such further tasks to all EUTM mandates would require the assent of all EU member states, entails risks for EUTM personnel and would require a significant expansion and reconfiguration of the missions’ roles. In part, this could be balanced by improving collaboration between EUTMs and parallel AU or UN operations.

*6. Improve coordination among international partners engaged in SSR*

There is an urgent need for stronger coordination between EUTMs and parallel AU and UN operations, as well as with bilateral trainers, including a clear division of labour and joint support plans on SSR. Host governments should lead SSR processes, and direct EUTMs and AU and UN parallel operations in their SSR and DSR activities. Open collaboration between EUTMs and Wagner Group military trainers is politically impossible and would in fact be undesirable. For EUTMs to be able to continue to operate, the EU and its member states will need to maintain pressure on host governments to align the Wagner Group’s activities with EU approaches and standards, including on human rights and international humanitarian law.

*7. Invest in better strategic communications, and local and national stakeholder involvement*

EUTMs should invest more in local and national actor engagement, outreach and strategic communications in order to improve their interaction with civil society, trainees, and national institutions and politics, and to foster local and national ownership, which is of the utmost importance for the sustainability of efforts. Improved dialogue with local and national stakeholders would also deepen the missions’ understanding of local cultural and historical contexts, which would contribute to a better analysis of security institutions and identification of the internal obstacles that obstruct their transformation. This would in turn help to better adapt training to local needs and contexts. Another way to solidify the cultural and contextual sensitivity of trainers and the missions’ training curriculum would be to improve pre-deployment induction training for EUTM personnel. Better strategic communication of mission objectives, activities and limitations to different target groups could also help to inform local expectations and contribute to a better understanding of mission mandates.

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