Enabel

Evaluation report on the Team Europe Support Structure (TESS) for Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa (MAV+) – TESS MAV+

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Consortium Particip and Technopolis

Final report

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enabel.be

This evaluation was carried out as part of the cooperation between African partners and Belgium.

The report was drawn up by independent external experts.

The opinions expressed in this document represent the views of the authors and are not necessarily shared by DG INTPA, Enabel, the Belgian Cooperation, Expertise France or GIZ. Any errors or factual omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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Acronyms

AD	Action Document
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMA	African Medicine Agency
AMRH	African Medicine Regulatory Harmonization
AMRHP	African Medicines Regulatory Harmonisation Programme
APPM	African Pooled Procurement Mechanism
AU	African Union
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development
AVMI	African Vaccine Manufacturing Initiative
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
Africa CDC	Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DGD	Belgian Direction Générale Coopération au Développement
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUMS	EU member states
EUR	Euro
FFA	Framework for Action
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HLSM	High Level Strategic Meeting
JC	Judgement Criterion
JIL	Joint Intervention Logic
KIIs	Key informant interviews
MAV+	Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa
MEAE	Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères
MPCA	Multi Partner Contribution Agreement
OSC	Operational Steering Committee
PAVM	Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing

PHAHM	Platform for Harmonized African Health Manufacturing
PMU	Project Management Unit
POM	Programme Operations Manual
PPRI	African Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Information Network
RCCNs	Regional Capability and Capacity Networks
RCOREs	Regional Centres of Regulatory Excellence
SCoMRA	Scientific Conference on Medical Product Regulation in Africa
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
STEP	Short-term Expert Pool
TA	Technical Assistance
TAs	Technical Assistants
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
TESS	Team Europe Support Structure
TFD	Technical and Financial Document
TOR	Terms of Reference
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization

Cooperation programme sheet

Title	Team Europe Support Structure (TESS) for Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa (MAV+) – TESS MAV+
Project code	BEL2100311 (DGD funding) BEL2100312 (EU funding)
Project zone	Europe/Africa
Priority sector(s) **Global Challenge(s)**	Health SDG 3.8 aiming to achieve universal health coverage, ensuring access to quality essential health services and financial risk protection for all individuals
Partner country(-ies)	African region
Partner institution(s)	Africa CDC, AUDA-NEPAD/AMRH, AMA
Total budget	15 500 000 EUR (total budget) Including: - 10 500 000 EUR (EU financial contribution) - 2 000 000 EUR (BMZ financial contribution) - 3 000 000 EUR (Belgian financial contribution)
Start date & end date of the specific agreement	01/01/2023 – 30/06/2026
Start date & expected end date of implementation	01/01/2023 – 30/06/2026
Impact	To facilitate access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential vaccines, medicines and health technologies for all, in alignment with SDG 3.8 and in the context of promoting universal health coverage (UHC)
Outcome	Enhance the TEI MAV+ coordination, technical expertise, progress monitoring, and communication.
Outputs	1. Output 1: Operational Support to the European Commission (EC) to facilitate the overall AU- EU Health Partnership TEI coordination of Team Europe members and the TEI monitoring, evaluation and communication[1] 2. Technical Support to TEI-MAV+ workstreams 3. Technical Support to PHAHM Secretariat

[1] After the Amendment n. NDICI AFRICA/2022/439-866 of the Document of Action, the Output 1 has been revised, formerly it was: *"Operational support to the EC to facilitate the overall coordination of Team Europe members, and the TEI monitoring, evaluation and communication"*.

	4. Technical Support to strengthen equitable access to quality health products in Africa (BE funding)
Period covered by the evaluation	01/01/2023 – 30/06/2026

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to express its sincere gratitude to all stakeholders consulted during this evaluation. Their availability and valuable insights were essential in informing the analysis and ensuring a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of TESS MAV+.

The team also extends its sincere appreciation to Sara Sangiuliano, Evaluation Advisor, and Marta Leone for their continuous support and flexibility, which were key to the successful completion of this assignment.

Evaluation team

- Anthony LAND, Team Leader
- Olivier WEIL, Public Health expert

1 Background and context

1.1 Contribution to the sectoral strategy

The Team Europe Initiative for Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa (TEI MAV+) was launched by the European Commission in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic exposed weaknesses in health systems and underlined the importance of resilient systems, as well as reliable access to affordable and quality health products. In Africa, this context gave further prominence to the African Union (AU)'s objective of increasing local vaccine production from 1% to 60% by 2040[2]. MAV+ contributes to this agenda by supporting the AU's efforts to strengthen access to affordable health products on the continent. Its broader objective is to help ensure equitable access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential vaccines, medicines and health technologies. This is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3.8 on universal health coverage.

TESS MAV+ supports this wider sectoral objective by strengthening the delivery system of MAV+. It was created to facilitate cooperation between European and African institutions and to support coordination, mobilisation of technical expertise, monitoring of progress and communication. Through this role, TESS is expected to contribute indirectly to the wider MAV+ objective of improving manufacturing and access to health products in Africa.

1.2 Key elements of the intervention strategy

TESS MAV+ was set up in 2023 as a support structure for MAV+. The intervention is organised around four outputs. The first concerns operational support to the European Commission for the coordination of AU-EU Health Partnership Team Europe members, including monitoring, evaluation and communication. The second focuses on technical support to MAV+ workstreams. The third provides support to the Platform for Harmonized African Health Manufacturing (PHAHM) Secretariat, while the fourth addresses technical support for equitable access to quality health products in Africa.

MAV+ is structured around six workstreams that address different dimensions of health product manufacturing and access. These cover industrial development, supply chains and the private sector; market shaping, demand and trade facilitation; regulatory strengthening; technology transfer and intellectual property management; access to finance; and research and development, higher education and skills. TESS supports this framework by facilitating coordination, providing or mobilising expertise, and supporting monitoring and communication across the initiative.

TESS MAV+ is jointly financed by the European Union, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Belgian Direction Générale Coopération au Développement (DGD), with a total budget of EUR 15.5 million. By means of a Multi Partner Contribution Agreement (MPCA) signed with Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), TESS is implemented by three European Technical Cooperation Agencies; Enabel, which has been responsible for outputs 1 and 4, Expertise France, responsible for output 2 and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), responsible for output 3. The intervention started on 1 January 2023 and is scheduled to end on 30 June 2026 (see Cooperation programme sheet for further details).

[2] Africa CDC (2021). Post-summit communiqué: African Union and Africa CDC launches Partnerships for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM), framework to achieve it and signs 2 MoUs.

1.3 Determining contextual factors

The intervention was designed in a context strongly shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the need for stronger health systems, more secure access to quality health products, and greater local production capacity in Africa. It also reinforced the relevance of continental initiatives aimed at strengthening vaccine, medicines and diagnostics manufacturing.

At continental level, the AU, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) and other regional actors have been working towards the objective of strengthening local health product manufacturing. The Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM), hosted by Africa CDC, has expanded beyond vaccines to include medicines and diagnostics, becoming the PHAHM. At the same time, the adoption of the African Medicine Agency (AMA) treaty in 2021 reinforced the work previously carried out through the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization initiative led by AUDA-NEPAD.

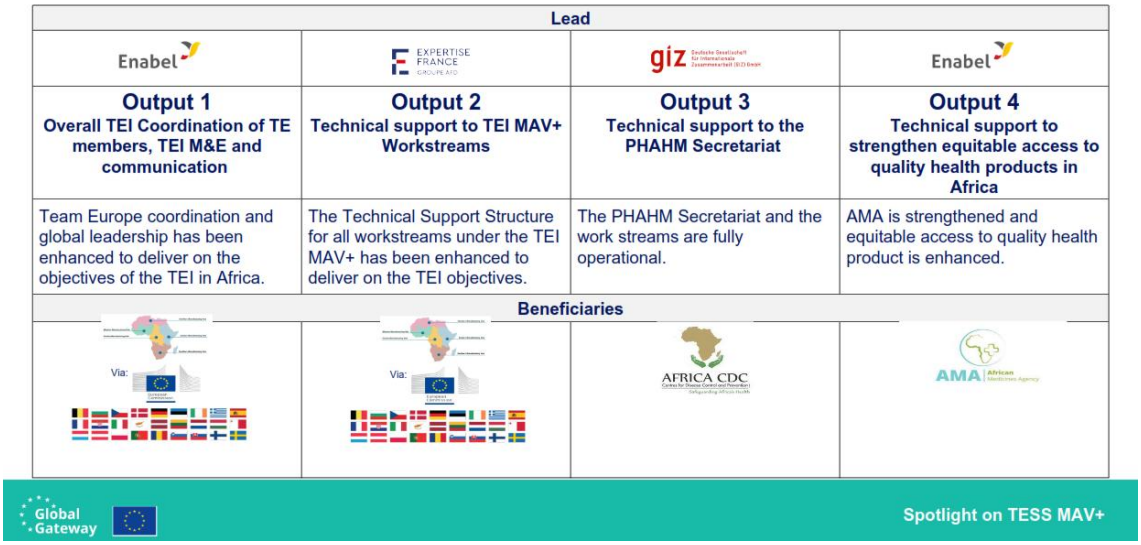
Another important contextual factor is the complexity of MAV+ itself. The initiative has mobilised a substantial budget nearing EUR 2 billion and brings together multiple European and African stakeholders covering a broad agenda across supply, demand and the enabling environment. This includes areas such as industrial development, supply chains, regulation, technology transfer, access to finance, research, higher education and skills. This multi-actor and multi-thematic set-up created a need for a dedicated support structure to facilitate coordination, communication, monitoring and access to technical expertise.

The wider Team Europe health architecture also evolved during implementation. In 2024, European Union (EU) Member States requested the reorganisation of five health-related TEIs in Africa into one umbrella initiative, the AU-EU Health Partnership TEI. MAV+ became one of the hubs within this wider framework. In 2026, the scope of TESS MAV+ was extended to include support to the five hubs under the AU-EU Health Partnership TEI, while maintaining its support to MAV+.

1.4 Governance of the intervention

TESS MAV+ is implemented through a consortium composed of Enabel, Expertise France and GIZ, with Enabel acting as lead organisation. Internal coordination is ensured through the TESS Project Management Unit, led by the Enabel Lead Coordinator and supported by Deputy Directors from Expertise France and GIZ. The project team comprises 22 staff members working across the four output areas, each under the responsibility of an output lead who is part of the Project Management Unit (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Output structure TESS MAV+



Source: TESS MAV+ – Team Europe Support Structure for TEI MAV+ Presentation (n.d.).

At strategic level, TESS is governed through a Steering Committee and the Project Management Unit. The Operational Steering Committee (OSC) for MAV+ was established to steer and manage TESS. It is chaired by DG INTPA and includes representatives of the development partners involved[3]. Implementing partners and African institutions may be invited, while coordinators of the health TEI hubs may participate as observers.

The governance and implementation model is central to the intervention. TESS is expected to provide added value through its consortium set-up, its role as a Technical Assistance (TA) and secretariat structure, its inter-agency coordination mechanism, and the technical expertise provided by the implementing agencies. The intervention is therefore intended to facilitate the implementation of MAV+ through shared coordination, pooled expertise and support to partnership between European and African stakeholders.

1.5 Main changes compared to the Technical and Financial Document (TFD)

Following the 2024 decision to reorganise the five health-related TEIs in Africa into a single umbrella initiative, the AU-EU Health Partnership TEI, MAV+ became one of the hubs within the broader structure. In 2025, the scope of TESS MAV+ was extended through an amendment to reflect the role that TESS would play in providing support to the five hubs under the AU-EU Health Partnership TEI. In line with this change, Output 1 was revised from operational support to the European Commission for the overall coordination of Team Europe members and TEI monitoring, evaluation and communication, to operational support to facilitate the overall AU-EU Health Partnership TEI coordination of Team Europe members, as well as TEI monitoring, evaluation and communication.

[3] Representatives from the EUMS Belgium, Germany and France.

2 Objectives and methodology

2.1 Objectives and scope of the TESS MAV+ Final Evaluation

This Final evaluation of TESS MAV+ covers the period of implementation from 1 January 2023 to June 2026. However, its focus is on the role and performance of TESS in relation to MAV+, according to its original mandate and scope of the Terms of Reference (TOR) questions, and not on the expanded mandate relating to the new integrated health TEI that began at the start of 2026. Lessons from the initial TESS set-up can however guide potential adaptations and improvements of the strategies and approaches used in future TEI interventions, in particular the AU-EU Health Partnership TEI.

In line with the Enabel evaluation policy, this evaluation serves both accountability and learning purposes and provides a set of evidence-based recommendations building on the intervention's strengths and identified weaknesses. The evaluation is also intended to provide insights on possible ways to improve partnership, governance and implementation mechanisms established for the new TEI. The evaluation pays special attention to the operationality and functioning of TESS and its TA/secretariat role for MAV+, focussing on the partnership between the key stakeholders, the coordination between the implementing agencies, and the strategies and mechanisms used for implementation. In so doing, it examines the added value created by this set-up, for the delivery of MAV+.

As mentioned above, the evaluation has two specific objectives: 1) **accountability** and 2) the **learning and strategic orientation**.

The accountability objective asks for a critical analysis of the performance of TESS. This includes the strategy, adopted implementing mechanisms, the partnerships framework, as well as delivery of outputs and achievements at the outcome-level. Consideration is given to the possible complementarities and synergies that have been created in the sector, as well as with other interventions implemented by partner agencies. Consideration has also been given to the extent to which cross-cutting issues related to gender, rights and the environment have been addressed.

The learning and strategic orientation objective focuses on identifying lessons learned from the successes and challenges of the approaches adopted by TESS. To this end, the evaluation has examined features of TESS' set up including its governance and implementation arrangements. The evaluation has identified lessons learned regarding successes and challenges of the used approaches, including the functioning and performance of the internal governance structure.

The primary users of this evaluation comprise development partners (EU, DGD, BMZ and the French Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères (MEAE)), the African institutional partners involved in the project, and TESS implementing agencies (Enabel, Expertise France and GIZ). Potential secondary users include European Union Delegations (EUDs), other EU member states (EUMS), other technical cooperation agencies, staff of other European Commission DGs involved in TEIs and experts involved in the design and implementation of TEI and Global Gateway initiatives.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1. Overall evaluation approach

The evaluation adopted a primarily qualitative approach, focused on gathering the insights and experiences of key stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of TESS services to MAV+, as well as of stakeholders from African partner institutions that received TESS technical support and/or

partnered with TESS. The main source of evidence consisted of key informant interviews (KIIs), complemented by a review of relevant documentation. The document review provided qualitative and quantitative information to triangulate findings emerging from interviews. This was achieved by sharing and discussing information collected from documents with key informants and by noting the consistency and robustness of key informant insight and observations. Where a point of view or observation expressed by a key informant differed substantially from those of others, this has been clearly noted in the presentation of findings.

No field-based primary data collection was carried out. Given the wide geographical distribution of key informants across Europe and Africa, and the limited time frame available for conducting the evaluation, and in agreement with the Reference Group, the evaluation was conducted remotely.

Particular attention was given to understanding what worked and why, as well as to understand why certain actions did not yield the expected results. In so doing, the evaluation addressed both accountability and lesson-learning objectives. It was informed by an appreciative enquiry lens and had a formative orientation, supporting the formulation of recommendations to inform future practice.

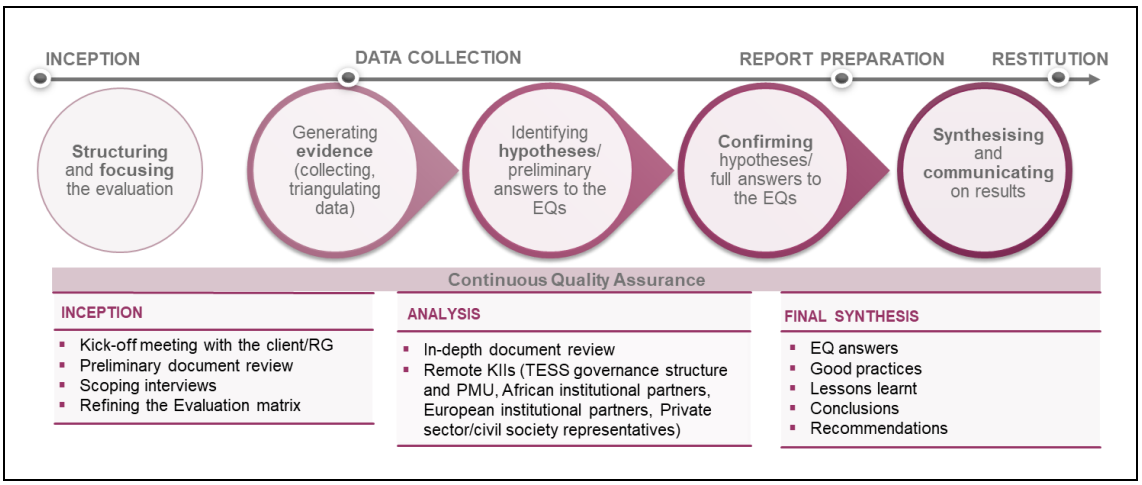
The evaluation was guided by an evaluation matrix setting out the key questions of enquiry (presented below) and is presented in full in Annex 3.

- EQ1 focuses on the conceptualisation and design of TESS, examining whether sufficient attention was given to responsiveness, ownership and strategic positioning among others. It is informed by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of efficiency and effectiveness (at output level),
- EQ2 focuses on the delivery of TESS' mandate, particularly its role in coordination, communication, engagement, and strategic and technical advisory support. It is guided by DAC criteria of effectiveness (at output level) and sustainability,
- EQ3 looks at the changes generated by TESS services for MAV+ Team Europe members and African partner institutions, including any unintended effects, and is informed by DAC criteria of effectiveness (at outcome level) and sustainability.
- EQ4 addresses cross-cutting dimensions of gender, human rights and environmental considerations.

2.2.2. Evaluation phases

The evaluation followed a conventional process comprising four main phases: inception, data collection, report preparation, and dissemination/restitution. Quality assurance was ensured by Particip with all deliverables undergoing thorough review before submission, and with continuous quality assessment across implementation of the four phases.

Figure 2: Evaluation phases



Source: Evaluation team

During the **inception phase,** the rationale, logic and methodology of the evaluation were confirmed. This phase focused on refining elements of the evaluation design contained in the technical proposal, including the Evaluation Matrix. It included kick-off meetings with the client and Reference Group, as well as an initial review of core documentation provided by the client.

The **data collection phase** consisted of remote interviews with key informants and further document review. Remote data collection enabled the evaluation team to reach stakeholders across different locations within the available timeframe. Given the short data collection period, close attention was paid to securing interviews within the designated period, with continued communication with the client to report progress and seek support when difficulties arose.

The **report preparation phase** involved the preparation of this evaluation report, including the submission of a draft final report. A presentation of the report's key conclusions and recommendations was made to the Reference Group as part of the review process. This final report takes account of feedback received during the presentation as well as the written comments of Reference Group members.

2.2.3. Data collection

As earlier noted, the evaluation relied entirely on remote data collection, allowing for a balanced approach to engaging the main partners. In total, 20 stakeholders were consulted, including members of TESS' governance structure (the OSC), members of the TESS management team as well as individual experts. African institutional partners linked to programmes of support under Outputs 3 and 4 were also interviewed. 15 individual remote semi-structured KIIs were conducted between April and June 2026. In addition, one Focus Group Discussion on output 2 was held with 5 participants from Expertise France and Enabel. A detailed list of the stakeholders consulted can be found in Annex 5.

Table 1: Summary of stakeholders met

EU	Belgium	Germany	France	African partners
• DG INTPA.G4	• DGD • Enabel	• BMZ • GIZ	• MEAE • Expertise France	• Africa CDC • AUDA-NEPAD

Source: Evaluation team

Selected documents were reviewed to complement interview evidence and support interview preparation. The document review built on a preliminary review conducted during the inception phase and was intended to provide factual information on what TESS is, how it has functioned, and what it has produced and achieved. The review covered both qualitative descriptive and analytical materials, as well as numerical and statistical data. The selection of documents was guided by the client and Reference Group, while additional relevant documents were identified during the course of data collection. The main categories of documents reviewed included project documents related to the design, implementation and reporting of TESS activities; monitoring and evaluation documents, such as progress reports, monitoring data, reviews, and learning documents; and technical documents produced or commissioned by TESS.

2.3 Limitations and constraints

Some limitations and constraints have influenced data collection and analysis.

For the document analysis, the evaluation team could not access the 2025 annual report which will only be approval after the completion of the evaluation. As 2025 has been a key year for the implementation of TESS, being unable to consult this annual report made it more difficult for the evaluators to extract details, potentially leading to a gap in their appreciation on key developments. In order to mitigate this information gap, the evaluators requested lists of the key analytical and research products developed under each of the outputs in 2025. The team was also not able to fully draw on the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation report of TESS. While providing helpful background material, it could not serve as a validated and comprehensive assessment of TESS due to scope/process limitations and the absence of formal endorsement by all partner agencies.

While remote data collection offered flexibility in interview scheduling (and was a necessity due to the geographical dispersion of key stakeholders), considerable delays were encountered in securing interviews, leading to a slow start and the need to extend the data collection phase by an additional week. The client and Reference Group however played an important role in sensitising stakeholders about the evaluation and in supporting the organisation of interview slots. All key interviews could eventually be conducted, even though their timing and sequencing was not optimal. As a result, some categories of potential key informants identified in the inception report were not interviewed, however this has not impacted negatively on the quality, veracity and robustness of the evaluation findings[4].

Another constraint was the tight schedule for data collection and report writing, which limited the time available for deeper reflections and consideration of additional sources. However, by allowing the data collection and analysis phases to merge into one another, the evaluators made the best

[4] It would have been desirable to have interviewed one or two EUDs that had drawn on the expertise of TESS. On the other hand, the initial expectation of the need to interview key stakeholders at country level (besides EUDs) proved un-necessary given that the main focus of TESS's work through output 3 and 4 was at the continental and sub-continental levels.

possible use of the time available. Some flexibility on the side of the client further helped to grant enough time for more in-depth analysis as well as for report writing.

2.4 Ethical standards

The evaluation complied with EU ethical and privacy rules and regulations, notably the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as well as with the consortium's internal policies and rules on ethical evaluations. Particip, as a member of the United Nations (UN) Global Compact, applies UN and DAC ethical standards in all evaluations. Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the evaluation process, including informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants, cultural sensitivity, and fair participant selection, including attention to women and socially excluded groups.

To the extent that Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used for document review or data analysis, its use was transparently documented in the key deliverables. No confidential, personal or otherwise sensitive information was entered into AI systems unless permitted under applicable legal requirements and protected by adequate technical and organisational safeguards. All AI-assisted outputs were subject to human review and validation, with full responsibility for the final content remaining with the authors. Any AI-assisted processing was carried out in a manner consistent with the GDPR.

3 Analysis and findings

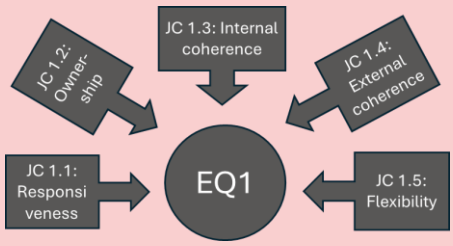
3.1 Introduction

This section presents the evaluation findings, which are presented in accordance with the four Evaluation Questions (EQs) and their associated Judgement Criteria (JCs), as set out in the Evaluation Matrix. Findings are structured as follows: First, a concise overall assessment is made at the level of each EQ. Second, findings related to each JC that fall under a specific EQ are presented. For each JC, a summary of findings is first presented, followed by a listing of main findings in bullet point format.

3.2 EQ1

EQ1: To what extent did the conceptualisation and design of TESS pay adequate attention to the dimensions of responsiveness, ownership, and strategic positioning?

EQ1 was examined from five interlinked perspectives. These considered i) overall responsiveness to needs, ii) level of ownership among key stakeholders involved, iii) internal coherence iv) external coherence and v) flexibility.



The overall conclusion is that the design was well considered and was able to respond to the anticipated needs and characteristics of an initiative as complex as MAV+. Given that MAV+ was the first experimentation with the Team Europe approach and that there were therefore no examples of good practice to draw upon, the design included flaws and required finessing during the course of implementation. The distinction between two broadly different types of roles and services within TESS is clear – **thus inward looking to support coordination of the MAV+ portfolio on behalf of DG INTPA and EUMS and on the other, providing discrete and targeted TA support to African partners.** Operationally these are quite different types of support placing different demands on the TESS Project Management Unit (PMU) to perform effectively. Providing coordination support may be considered the default role of a support service and probably could not have been delivered in a different way. Support to African stakeholders stands out as a different type of work that may not necessarily be associated with a conventional support service role and could potentially have been provided through other mechanisms. However, a logic and rationale for combining these functions under one roof can be seen. Another interesting feature of TESS was the decision to mobilise three technical agencies to implement the TESS mandate via a Multi-partner Partnership Agreement (MPCA). This has proven to be an innovative and challenging choice of delivery modalities that has presented both advantages and disadvantages and offers a number of lessons of experience that may inform future practice. At a strategic level, the projection of a partnership of EUMS technical cooperation agencies can be seen as positive in terms of advancing the Team Europe vision. It also offered important institutional value additions that any single service provider may not be in a position to offer. However, at the operational level, establishing a common management system with clear lines of accountability and agreed procedures and norms as well as working towards an agreed set of collective results presented challenges. These challenges were generally resolved and most

importantly did not appear to prevent TESS from delivering its core outputs, although they affected efficiency and limited the full potential for integrated delivery.

3.2.1 On Responsiveness

JC 1.1: The TESS design concept took account of the needs and priorities of MAV+ and considered the wider strategic framework (e.g. Team Europe Approach, Global Gateway) within which it is embedded.

Summary

The TESS design concept generally responded well to the needs and priorities of MAV+ partners and was structured in a way that allowed it to promote the vision of the Team Europe approach. Having a support structure for a TEI as large and ambitious as MAV+ was an absolute necessity, however, it only became operational two years after the start of MAV+. Nevertheless, the delay in starting allowed TESS to learn from the ground up to ensure its readiness to respond to operational realities. Whereas TESS outputs 1 and 2 (coordination and policy analysis) were designed to align with what may be considered the core roles of a support structure, the inclusion of outputs 3 and 4 with their external orientation and focus on TA support to partner institutions was less evident – however these two outputs helped to reinforce partnership between Europe and Africa, which is at the core of the MAV+ TEI, and ensured that TESS was not solely inward looking. The appointment of three member state technical cooperation agencies to manage TESS was considered a symbolic way to reinforce the Team Europe approach but in so doing brought into relief a number of institutional and operational challenges to working collaboratively. This included the relatively strict division of labour between the three agencies, different and at times competing institutional interests and expectations as well as the separation of budget lines according to source of funding.

Findings

- The underlying objectives, rationale, operational arrangements and governance of TESS are encapsulated in an Action Document (AD) and translated into an MPCA. The AD and MPCA provide the principal reference point for guiding the work of TESS, reinforced later on with the drafting of a Programme Operations Manual (POM).
- The need to establish a structure to support MAV+ delivery was recognised from the outset but it took two years before the structure was put in place[5]. While this meant that TESS was not able to accompany MAV+ from the start, it did mean that the detailed design of the structure once in place was able to build on lessons of experience from the first two years of operation. In this regard the 6-month inception phase was crucial in aligning design concept to realities on the ground.
- The choice of an MPCA and appointment of three EUMS technical agencies to run TESS was very much in the spirit of Team Europe and had the ambition to project a Europe wide initiative. However, the challenges of aligning the three agencies to common vision, rules and procedures was likely under-estimated even with the drafting of a POM[6]. There have thus been challenges in advancing collective ambitions while keeping in check push factors driven by both individual interests at funder and implementing partner levels. It was suggested that the original conceptualisation of TESS was premised on an assumption that did not take sufficient account of competing institutional incentives and interests[7].
- The primary objective of TESS to support MAV+ partners to coordinate their respective inputs (the basis for output 1) was a pre-requisite given the scale, breadth and overall complexity of MAV+. This was particularly important for DG INTPA in view of its leadership role and expectations of steering the MAV+ endeavour while taking account of the limits of its in-house capacity to provide dedicated

[5] Attributed in part to the time required to approve actions but also impacted by disruptions caused by COVID 19
[6] The evaluation team was however informed that one of the three implementing agencies did not endorse the POM.
[7] According to the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the budget from Belgium for TESS is evenly distributed between what may be considered the specific interests of Belgium and contributing to collective action.

support. Limited capacity applied to EUMS too, who struggled to mobilise the necessary human resources to work on MAV+ on a full-time basis. There were however no guidelines, nor prior experiences, on how best to manage the relationship between DG INTPA and EUMS, nor how best to galvanise a genuine Team Europe collective approach, as MAV+ was the first TEI to be launched.

- TESS's role in delivering technical support to MAV+ partners through analysis and research (especially through output 2) with a focus on substantive topic areas may be considered a necessary complement to the process support offered under output 1 allowing MAV+ partners to make informed choices at policy, strategic and operational levels and to enable more substantive engagement with African partners and international stakeholders.
- Outputs 3 and 4, as foreseen in the AD had both an external orientation aimed at responding to the needs and expectations of MAV+ institutional partners in Africa while seeking also to strengthen the overall partnership between MAV+ European and African partners. See also JC 1.2.
- It is important to recall that TESS was designed to provide a set of services to its principals and to operate primarily on a demand-driven basis. While it's work was guided by an annual workplan, approved by the OSC, that gave it some degree of independence of action, TESS was not entrusted with decision making powers or authority over MAV+ members, and was not expected to represent MAV+ members with external partners, unless specifically tasked to do so. From this perspective, TESS was expected to maintain a low profile and to focus strictly on technical matters, and to refer any policy issues arising to INTPA and EUMS. Nevertheless, some view TESS as having in practice sometimes over-stepped this role by being drawn into policy discussions and being perceived to be the mouthpiece for INTPA and EUMS.
- Ultimately, TESS could be described as a hybrid entity combining elements of a conventional service contract provider as well as operating much like a self-standing TA project[8].

3.2.2 On Ownership

JC 1.2: TESS was designed to respond appropriately to the needs, priorities and interests of African partners involved in local medicine manufacturing.

Summary

TESS was not necessarily owned by African partners because a large part of the TESS mandate was inward looking focused on coordination and policy advice to the MAV+ European partners. African input at a TESS governance level was therefore limited, yet there was possibly scope to have increased this, although views differ as to whether this would be warranted. However, output 3 and 4[9] had a clear external focus with the intent to facilitate the delivery of African institutional partners own strategic priorities. These two outputs certainly enjoyed partner country ownership at a programmatic/ operational level and the support provided was highly appreciated. If anything, greater horizontal ownership among EUMS and DG INTPA for the work of these two output areas, which was funded by Belgium and Germany could have been reinforced.

Findings

- Whereas MAV+ strongly projects its partnership credentials by aligning MAV+ European inputs to an African led agenda, TESS was conceived primarily as a tool to facilitate the Team Europe approach between the European Commission (EC) and EUMS.
- African participation in the design and oversight of TESS was therefore limited. African partners were not directly involved in the design and establishment of TESS, and no formal role was ascribed to African partners in the governance of TESS (via the OSC)[10].

[8] In so doing, it embraced characteristics of the resource centre model which is based on a decentralized, multi-functional hub that brings together specialized human and material resources to support a specific community, organization, or field.
[9] To a lesser extent output 2 also had an external orientation although according to the output 2 team, this was not initially foreseen in the design.
[10] African partners have typically been invited to participate in discussions on specific agenda items.

- Whilst some European stakeholders believe this was a correct approach, regarding the role of the OSC to ensure alignment with a Team Europe approach, some felt that in the spirit of partnership and given the alignment of MAV+ to an African led agenda, a more structured participation of African stakeholders in the OSC was warranted. Their absence during the design phase is also considered to have been a missed opportunity to have ensured endorsement of a design that fully reflected African partner needs and priorities. Although African partners consulted did not directly raise this issue in interviews, they noted the overall strength of the partnership at the policy/ political level and pointed to the maturing of the High Level Strategic Meeting (HLSM) in this regard.
- African partners also remarked on what they regarded as an adequate level of participation in the planning and decision-making of support provided under outputs 3 and 4, noting their involvement in twice yearly planning meetings to set priorities and a programme of work and in the selection and performance assessment of short and long term experts[11]. TESS staff also recognised the importance of maintaining regular and transparent communications with their African partners during the course of implementation, to promote shared management and as a way to build trust.
- It is also worth noting that the embedded TA modality – though not without its challenges as discussed under JC 2.2. below – generated a high level of ownership among African institutions of the individual experts seconded to their organisations and alignment of their work with institutional priorities and plans. In fact, the extent to which embedded TA were oriented their host institutions could at times make it difficult for them to fulfil their dual mandate of facilitating backward linkages into the MAV+ European community.

3.2.3 On Internal coherence

JC 1.3: The TESS design provided for a governance structure that supports internal coordination among partners and implementing agencies and a smooth implementation of the TESS work programme.

Summary

TESS was able to maintain a reasonable degree of internal coherence across its four output areas and in relation to the six MAV+ workstreams. Provisions for such coherence were foreseen in the original design, but it took time in practice to operationalise this intent. Various organisational challenges, related to the appointment of the three technical cooperation agencies to manage TESS, were encountered which created some obstacles to operational efficiency, while also contributing at times to un-necessary transaction costs. TESS management worked hard to resolve these challenges and generally consider that these did not ultimately prevent TESS from achieving its goals. Whilst the more inward facing rationales of outputs 1 and 2, and the external facing rationales of outputs 3 and 4 can be considered complementary to one another, the coherence between these two inward focused and two outward facing outputs was not always so evident.

Findings

- Various provisions are contained within the AD and POM to promote linkages and coherence across the four outputs. For example, the policy and research work of output 2 was foreseen to support both DG INTPA and EUMS as well as the African partners supported through outputs 3 and 4. Likewise short term experts mobilised under output 1 (Short-term Expert Pool or STEP) were expected to service the

[11] AUDA-NEPAD appreciated their active participation in the initial design of output 4, which included a needs assessment, and consideration of entry points for support which led to the eventual identification of regulatory systems capacity strengthening. Of note the support provided under output 4 falls within a wider programme of cooperation between Enabel and AUDA-NEPAD that is aligned to AUDA-NEPADs 5 year regulatory harmonisation plan.

needs of European and African partners. Technical experts from across outputs 2-4 were also expected to support the work of the communications and M&E officers, operating under output 1.

- A set of meetings are identified in the POM, a number of which were designed specifically to promote cross-output collaboration. These include the 2 weekly TESS staff meetings as well a periodic stand-up meetings[12]. The 2024 progress report also notes the organisation of monthly technical meetings between output 2 and 3 experts working on the same MAV+ workstream, as well as the organisation of an annual cross-output workshop to support the preparation of the annual TESS workplan. The report also notes efforts made to clarify roles between output 2 and output 4 in the area of regulatory strengthening, where there had been risks of duplication of effort[13]. Moreover, during the 6 month inception phase, a set of workshops were organised to define vision and modus operandi noting in particular the orientation and limitations set by the AD.
- In practice, some more *structural barriers* could limit efforts to collaborate and resolve differences:
  - the overall TESS coordinator did not have executive authority over the programme and across the managers of the different output areas, who also represented the different technical cooperation agencies. This could make it difficult to resolve the different and at times conflicting agendas of the three technical cooperation agencies implementing TESS[14].
  - The different procedures, rules and scope of activities funded from different sources also created some barriers which could create delays when collective decision-making or approvals were required, increasing overall the transaction costs of engagement and limiting the possibilities for synergy.
  - It was also noted that there were deliberate choices made to have certain functions co-managed, as was the case for communications. Whilst this should have facilitated a stronger joined up approach, in absence of resolution of some of the underlying challenges, it could result in contested decision making.
- Sometimes the challenges were less structural than *personal* as illustrated by the need in 2024 to recruit a Human Resources consultant to resolve some internal management challenges, that were undermining a more joined up way of working across the three implementing agencies[15].
- In the opinion of one key informant, insufficient leadership oversight, from especially DG INTPA as contracting authority, left too much room for TESS PMU actors to interpret their mandates and understanding of how they should interact. However, it was also remarked that DG INTPA was in almost daily contact with TESS management which should have enabled prompt resolution of management issues as they arose[16]. A representative of one of the three agencies however underscored that while these tensions existed, efforts were also being made to communicate to African partners that their agency's support was part of a larger collective Team Europe effort. DG INTPA also underscored the efforts taken to encourage a collective approach insisting that any analytical work requested of TESS should aim at providing collective benefits rather than servicing uniquely the requesting partner.
- The OSC, which met twice a year and brought together representatives of Germany, France, Belgium and the European Commission, provided formal oversight over TESS. Whilst it might have been expected to play a role in encouraging an internally coherent approach, at times it risked reinforcing a

[12] P25 of the POM provides a complete list of the different categories of meetings foreseen
[13] While Output 2 leads on technical regulatory frameworks, Output 4 focuses on operational implementation, including regulatory training and expert network development.
[14] According to the 2024 Annual progress report: "Despite a complex set-up which caused some tensions, the project coordination maintained dialogue, navigated challenges, and enabled the project to achieve its objectives.". This follows an observation in the 2023 report noting the; "Challenges of building a single system that meets the requirements and rules of the 3 implementing agencies (particularly in terms of interconnectivity and communication),…."
[15] An illustration of this was the challenge in conducting the Mid-Term Evaluation which resulted in the final report not being published due to disagreements over the way the evaluation was commissioned and eventually to an unwillingness to endorse the report among the three parties involved.
[16] EUMS have also maintained regular, but ad hoc and informal relations with the TESS PMU.

more siloed approach with members initially focusing on their respective budget contributions and associated projects, rather than looking at ways to build synergies[17].

3.2.4 On External coherence and strategic positioning

JC 1.4: The TESS design took account of the wider policy and operational context to ensure strategic positioning of TESS vis-à-vis other related initiatives so as to generate complementarities and comparative advantage, while avoiding risks of duplication.

Summary

There is little evidence to suggest that much consideration was given during the design of TESS to issues of external coherence and strategic positioning. This reflected the fact that TESS did not have its own agency and identity and was expected to operate according to requests placed on it by the contracting authority and funders. It was made clear from the start that TESS should not substitute for or represent MAV+ partners in external engagements other than when instructed to do so by its principals. By design and in practice, TESS's service delivery role to the wider MAV+ community, meant there was little risk of duplication of roles and/ or of activities. TESS was nevertheless expected to facilitate MAV+ engagement in the international arena and this proved to be a role where TESS was particularly successful. However, this success sometimes came at the risk of drawing excessive attention to itself and to the creation of a misplaced belief that TESS was representing the Commission and EUMS.

Findings

- There is little discussion of TESS' external coherence and positioning in design documents, although at a more operational level, the POM sets out how TESS is expected to support MAV+ partners in their engagements at regional, continental and international events.
- TESS' field of operations was strictly delineated by the scope of MAV+ operations, but its networking and analytical work allowed it to project MAV+ in a variety of international settings for example the World Local Production Forum in the Hague in 2023[18]. Analytical works and research studies commissioned by MAV+ partners could moreover find their way into international fora where they would be presented alongside studies and reports of other international stakeholders.
- The comparative success of TESS in such endeavours risked on occasions that TESS was regarded by external stakeholders as being the mouthpiece of and / or official representative body for MAV+ members, and this could on occasion lead to misunderstandings. This was almost unavoidable and arose because of TESS's inherent capacity to engage and to be present in global fora. By contrast DG INTPA and member states' own capacity was far more limited.
- For output 3's work with Africa CDC, efforts were made by the implementing partner (GIZ) to identify entry points for linking output 3 to other (GIZ) support to CDC (whether inside or outside the framework of MAV+). Individual experts were also encouraged to build their own personal and institutional networks to identify ways in which the work of TESS could link up to other initiatives in the sector. This was also expected of the embedded TA supporting AUDA-NEPAD, and as earlier noted, output 4 formed part of a wider joint programme of work between Enabel and AUDA-NEPAD, which extended beyond TESS. Such initiatives at addressing strategic positioning, albeit conducted at agency and project level can be considered as being informed by a more general concern to assure the external coherence and strategic positioning of TESS.

[17] This applied in particular to outputs 3 and 4 but also to some extent to output 2.
[18] As reported in the 2023 Annual Progress report

3.2.5 On Flexibility

JC 1.5: The TESS design included provisions for continuous adaptation and risk assessment in order to take account of unforeseen changes and opportunities in the operating environment/ context.

Summary

TESS demonstrated a certain level of flexibility but remained bound by the overall design parameters reflected in the AD and MPCA, including budget lines. Decisions regarding any departure from initial design rested with the contracting authority DG INTPA and consultations with members of the OSC. The 6-month inception phase allowed for an alignment of the design to on-the-ground needs and lessons learnt, while the preparation of annual workplans built on internal learning and emerging needs of MAV+ partners (European and African). This included adjusting to a fast-changing policy and institutional environment. Changes that were made were reflected in annually updated risk matrices. At an operational level, certain procedural rigidities meant that embedded TA were not always assisted as expeditiously as was required.

Findings

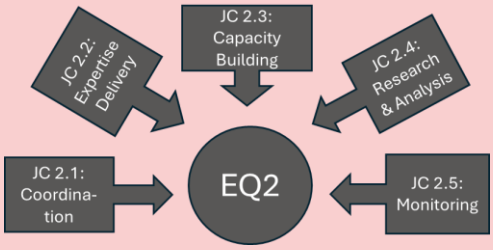
- TESS' ability to operate flexibly was circumscribed by the provisions of the MPCA in terms of objectives, priorities, budget lines and operational arrangements. Notwithstanding these contractual constraints, the actors involved (the OSC and TESS PMU) have sought to adjust TESS's priorities and ways of working based on lessons of experience and an evolving external environment, and as set out in the POM.
- Changes in the external policy and institutional environment prompted a re-orientation of TESS priorities. The PMU demonstrated its ability to adjust and respond although doing so placed considerable strain on staff involved. The most notable change was the decision to integrate MAV+ into a single super health TEI, the AU-EU Health Partnership TEI, where TESS has been asked since the start of 2026 to take on a number of responsibilities to also support the four other hubs that are now part of the single TEI. The transition from PAVM to PHAHM also allowed TESS to consider pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution beyond strictly vaccines production. The start of the Belgian presidency of the EU in 2024 also led to additional demands placed on TESS to provide a stream of technical inputs in support of various policy discussions.
- The management of embedded TA in a partner organization is inevitably accompanied by various logistical and administrative challenges. TESS experience points both to the important role played by backstopping staff to be ready to facilitate the embedded Technical Assistants' (TAs') delivery in a partner organization but also reveals the kinds of challenges that can arise when such backstopping is not forthcoming, particularly resolution of logistical and administrative bottlenecks. Administrative delays associated with contracting procedures also affected the initial recruitment of a number of embedded TA's, which led to delays in the startup of activities.
- Remaining flexible and on-standby to respond to short-notice requests proved to be an important characteristic of the PMU modus operandi. It was apparent across all four output areas. Examples of such need to be flexible included attending to short notice requests for technical inputs to upcoming communications, presentations at events, and being able to provide logistical support to upcoming events. However, complex procedures associated with the validation/ approval of requests by the contracting authority to conduct specific pieces of work was identified as a constraint to operating flexibly and pro-actively.
- The annual updating of a risk matrix allowed for the identification and documentation of changing circumstances and proposal of mitigating/ response strategies[19].

[19] As illustrated in the 2024 progress report which includes an updated risk matrix in the annex.

3.3 EQ2

EQ2:
To what extent did TESS deliver on its mandate in terms of coordination, communication and engagement as well as strategic and technical advisory support?

EQ2 has been examined from five perspectives that consider the different roles played by TESS towards on the one hand promoting coordination across the MAV+ portfolio and giving visibility to the Team Europe approach, and on the other hand, providing TA to both MAV+ European partners as well as targeted support to MAV+ African institutional partners.



The overall conclusion is that the quality of TESS service delivery has been high and consistently applied, in line with expectations of what a support service or facility might be expected to deliver. The range of services delivered has however been quite broad and the interlinkages between the different service areas have not necessarily been as strong and articulated as they could have been. While roles and responsibilities were generally clear, there were some distinct areas where this was not the case which created un-necessary friction in what otherwise could have been a smooth delivery system. In part and as earlier discussed, this can be attributed to the nature of an MPCA and the inherent challenges of internal coordination when three different institutional actors are involved. It can also be attributed in part to characteristics of MAV+ itself involving multiple actors with different and sometimes competing institutional interests and / or outlooks on what TESS should be tasked to do.

Overall, a lower than desired disbursement rate was reported in 2023 with some improvements reported in 2024. However, this has remained somewhat below expectations, placing considerable pressure to disburse across the 2025/ 26 period.

3.3.1 On Coordination

JC 2.1: TESS has provided appropriate operational support to address the coordination, monitoring and communication needs of MAV+ Team Europe partners (DG INTPA and EUMS).

Summary

TESS has fulfilled its mandate to facilitate the coordination of MAV+ partners as foreseen in the MPCA and AD. MAV+ partners including INTPA as contracting authority appreciate the contribution TESS has made given the complexities and challenges involved. Tasks were primarily implemented through the work of output 1 and to a lesser extent by output 2, however, even work conducted through outputs 3 and 4 have contributed indirectly. Key tasks performed by output 1 comprised monitoring and reporting on the MAV+ portfolio, providing communications support through a range of activities, supporting information exchange, and providing secretariat support with respect to the design and implementation of internal and external events. Meanwhile output 2 provided technical inputs at the request of MAV+ partners that contributed to the planning/ programming of MAV+ projects and related decision-making around coherence and complementary across the six workstreams. Embedded TA working across outputs 3 and 4 supported coordination through the information and insights fed back from the field. As a support facility, however, TESS lacked the authority to impose any tools or procedures nor to issue instructions to MAV+

partners. The scope and range of products and services developed by TESS were determined by DG INTPA and EUMS, and the use of such products and services was at their discretion. TESS's role in facilitating a coordinated approach fell short of developing systems for joint planning and programming, recognising the need to respect a certain independence of action of individual MAV+ members, notwithstanding their being part of a TEI.

Findings

- The TESS PMU proved itself capable of responding to a variety of requests to support the coordination of the MAV+ portfolio, despite challenges encountered along the way. While it successfully developed a number of coordination tools, it was ultimately up to MAV+ partners to decide how far they would use these[20]. TESS itself had no authority to impose any tool or procedure. In this regard, the 2024 annual progress report underlines the need for TESS to regularly engage with MAV+ partners to test their readiness to adopt particular tools and notes the complex landscape of stakeholders that could make it difficult for TESS to ascertain areas where progress could most easily be made. What is clear is that TESS helped DG INTPA to play its coordination role in a way that would not have been possible without it being in place. Below some of the main areas of intervention by TESS in the area of coordination are listed:
- *Support to the preparation of events (content and process)* – TESS was routinely called upon to prepare meetings involving MAV+ members as well as African partners. This included designing events, preparing agendas and agenda items, drafting supporting documentation and compiling minutes/ reports thereafter. Such tasks were carried out in support of scheduled internal MAV+ planning and progress meetings, engagements with African partners including the annual HLSM as well as participation in international events. TESS role in data and file management is also recognised, which has helped create a vital institutional memory in a context of frequent staff turnover among MAV+ partners.
- *Monitoring, reporting and communications* – was perhaps the most important area of work contributing to coordination and is therefore treated separately below under JC 2.5. A variety of products and services were generated including conduct of mapping studies of MAV+ projects and funding streams, updating of the joint intervention logic and core indicators, production of the annual progress report and publication of a fact sheet, development and maintenance of a dashboard, and publication of a monthly internal newsletter.
- *Joint planning and programming* – Only limited progress was made in advancing joint planning and programming among MAV+ partners, despite the expectations reported in the 2023 Annual progress report that the core business of TESS was to engage MAV+ partners to foster such programming. While a Joint Intervention Logic (JIL) was developed, which was used as a basis for drawing performance indicators, and which has been used for reporting purposes, (and subsequently aligned with PAVM/ PHAHM indicators), the JIL has been less impactful serving as a strategic tool to guide the overall development of the MAV+ portfolio of projects. TESS was however expected to engage with MAV+ members during their monthly planning and review meetings and it was directly involved in technical discussions related to the proposed amalgamation of the five health TEIs into a single TEI, where the JIL was used as a point of reference for formulating shared outcomes.
- *Contributions of outputs 3 and 4 to coordination* – Whilst the coordination function was the primary responsibility of the teams working under outputs 1 and 2, the contribution of embedded TA working under outputs 3 and 4 was highlighted by a number of key informants. While being more indirect and

[20] The 2023 annual progress report notes that in response to a low uptake by MAV+ partners of tools and suggestions for coordination, TESS took the initiative to organise some sensitisation and awareness raising trainings for and consultations with MAV+ partners.

less formalised, embedded TA could share insights based on their own work that could be of potential value to decision-making across the six workstream areas. This could include identifying possible opportunities for collaboration and linking up.

3.3.2 On Delivery of Timely and Effective Expertise

JC 2.2: TESS was able to mobilise appropriate strategic & technical expertise to deliver effective support across the different MAV+ workstreams, including to African partners.

Summary

The provision of technical expertise has represented one of the cornerstones of TESS's operations complementing the secretariat cum coordination support roles described above and also below. TESS' delivery of timely and effective technical expertise draws a mixed picture of success across the different instruments available but overall has made an immense contribution to MAV+ European and African partners. Expertise was provided through the deployment of short-term experts using mainly the STEP tool (output 1), through a team of long-term experts that were part of the TESS PMU (output 2), and through a set of embedded experts deployed into Africa CDC and AUDA-NEPAD (outputs 3 and 4). Each modality performed a specific role and set of tasks and serviced particular clients/ demands. Noteworthy is the extent to which expertise under the three modalities worked collaboratively even if this did not happen as systematically as might have been desired or as efficiently as might have been needed. In combination technical expertise contributed in different ways to capacity strengthening, policy advise, applied research and knowledge exchange. Delivery of short term expertise was constrained by a management system (STEP) that at times was cumbersome and not always able to match supply and demand in a timely manner. Concern was also raised about the un-even quality of the experts in the pool. Output 2 experts had to contend with multiple demands stemming from different clients demanding quite different types of work, while also challenged at times to work in a complementary way with short-term and embedded experts. Embedded experts often found themselves overwhelmed by technical and administrative duties, had to contend with dual reporting and accountability lines and often worked without sufficient institutional and logistical support from the host partner. Embedded TA did not always provide the level of backward information flow and exchange as might have been hoped for.

Findings

- *Short term experts* – The management of short-term experts fell under the responsibility of output 1 for which a dedicated tool – the STEP – was developed[21]. Aimed at streamlining the process of matching supply and demand, in practice STEP encountered several challenges which impacted on its effectiveness. These included some initial challenges with the requesting process, a slow turn around period and difficulties in sourcing the right expertise from within the pool. Nevertheless, during the course of 2024, 10 short-term experts were mobilised who implemented assignments either for MAV+ European partners – and in particular DG INTPA – and to a lesser extent African partner, while in 2025, short-term experts delivered approximately 18 assignments[22]. The nature of assignments varied and included support for coordination functions as well as addressing specific technical requests related to the different MAV+ workstreams. On occasions where it was not possible to source the right expert from the pool, experts were mobilised from other sources.
- *Long term Experts* – A team of full-time PMU-based experts constituted TESS's output 2 workstream. The areas of expertise covered by this team mirrored the six MAV+ workstreams and was set up to service emerging needs of DG INTPA and MAV+ partners for a range of advisory inputs ranging from ad hoc requests to preparing concept notes, speaking notes and/ or review of draft documents to

[21] STEP comprised 15 lots covering different thematic and technical areas of work including regulatory, technology transfer, supply chains, skills development and market shaping.
[22] According to the 2024 annual report and information shared by the PMU on STEP deliverables in 2025.

undertaking more substantive pieces of analytical work[23]. The output 2 team were guided both by specific requests as well as by an annual workplan approved by the OSC, however initially, it took up to 9 months for the output to get fully up and running. The workload placed on the output 2 team was considerable and challenges were encountered in managing demands and in particular of maintaining a strategic focus while remaining demand responsive[24]. The team were also expected to interact with the other TA modalities and output areas. In this respect, they would act on occasions as supervisors for the short-term experts deployed under STEP and would also provide support to the work of embedded TA (see below) when called upon to do so (eg on work related to procurement readiness). Over time, output 2 experienced a shift in the source of demands with a slowing down of requests from DG INTPA (initially 90% of requests came from DG INTPA and other DGs in the 2023/4 reporting period) and European partners[25] and a growing demand from EUDs. This has been attributed on the one hand to limited absorption capacity of headquarter agencies to process technical analysis being generated and on the other hand to the realisation of EUDs to the availability of TESS as a potential source of expertise to address their immediate operational needs (dialogue and programming). The shift in source of requests also led to fewer demands for at short notice quick response requests to more demands for substantive analytical work. A recurring challenge facing output 2 was to try to service their client based in a balanced way and to ensure that while the products of their work responded to the specific needs of a particular client, also benefitted the MAV+ community more widely[26].

- *Embedded experts* – TESS deployed a set of experts who were embedded in African partner institutions under outputs 3 and 4[27]. These experts constituted the principal support modality offered to the partner institutions and were each responsible for leading a work programme guided by the respective institution[28]. Embedded experts retained backward linkages with the TESS PMU, receiving administrative and technical backstopping support while being expected to both draw on expertise as required from outputs 1 and 2[29] as well as sharing knowledge and insights based on their work, that could benefit the wider MAV+ community. While the overall experience of embedded TA has been positive, administrative, logistical and capacity challenges have been noted which impacted performance. These included familiar challenges faced by individuals who have to manage dual lines of accountability, various delays and bottlenecks related to approvals especially for travel and organisation of events, and more substantive concerns about the adequacy of institutional support (human resources in particular but also budget) provided by their host institutions raising concerns for sustainability (see further below EQ 3). It was also remarked that the degree of feeding back to TESS and MAV+ partners was less than hoped for and tended to rely on individual initiative than on structured mechanisms that could have encouraged a more balanced role for embedded TA servicing both host institution and TESS. While the high level of expertise and dedication of most of the embedded experts was emphasised by African partners, the suggestion was made that going forward preference would be to receive financial assistance to enable direct recruitment of experts by the African partner[30]. Concern was also expressed that whereas the modality is appropriate as a short-term intervention to gap-fill and fast-track progress in specific areas, results risk not being sustainable

[23] According to the POM, output 2 "aims at providing an enhanced support structure for all work streams under the TEI to help underpin the global leadership role of the EU, which will ensure that the EU delivers on its objective." The 2023 Annual report notes that a specific digital tool was designed to facilitate the processing and follow-up of requests.
[24] To position themselves to be ready to respond to emerging demands, the team of output 2 experts conducted preparatory analytical work in key areas.
[25] Requests from EUMS included some from the smaller MAV+ funders including Spain and the Netherlands.
[26] At times there could be a tension between respecting confidentiality and generating a public good.
[27] Six experts were embedded in Africa CDC and one embedded in AUDA-NEPAD. There are in addition two other long term experts under output 4 but these are not embedded and are supporting Belgian support to regulatory strengthening/ access to quality health products more generally.
[28] AUDA-NEPAD remarked on their detailed involvement in the preparation of TORS and in the selection of the embedded expert.
[29] In the case of Africa CDC, workshops were organised early on to explore opportunities to draw on short term and resident experts. It was thereafter left to embedded TA to identify specific opportunities for collaboration. Overall, the results have been mixed with some instances of successful collaboration but other cases which proved disappointing, particularly with respect to use of short term experts. AUDA-NEPAD on the other hand reports positively on the contribution of short term experts to the design of key tool that have accompanied the work of the output 4 embedded expert, whilst output 2 experts also provided analysis to the programme on regulatory issues, although this was on an ad hoc basis.
[30] This request also reflected some frustration with having had to establish three separate MOUs and administrative arrangements with each of the TESS implementing agencies in order to draw expertise across the different output areas.

in the absence of specific measures to address internal capacity constraints within the host institution[31].

3.3.3 On Capacity building and partnership

JC 2.3: TESS delivered tailored support to strengthen the capacity of African partner institutions at continental, regional (and country) levels as well as to facilitate direct collaboration between African stakeholders and MAV+ Team Europe partners.

Summary

TESS's various embedded TA hosted by Africa CDC and by AUDA-NEPAD were not primarily tasked to build the capacity of their host institutions. Such institutional strengthening was considered beyond the scope of TESS and to be addressed through other interventions inside and outside of MAV+. In some instances, however, the work of embedded TA contributed to internal institutional changes and strategy development but in other cases, concern was expressed about the lack of direct engagement of the host institution in the technical work with an over-reliance on TA inputs raising concerns for sustainability (see further EQ 3). As such one might categorise embedded TA as functioning first and foremost as capacity gap-fillers performing a strict technical or policy advisory role. However, for a few of the embedded TA, their main responsibility focused on human resources development in selected thematic areas at continental, regional and country levels. These have moreover proven to be among the more impactful areas of TESS's externally oriented work as further examined under EQ 3. The contribution of TESS' embedded experts to strengthening the partnership between African and European partners is less clear. Embedded TA were not directly expected per se to work on strengthening the partnership between MAV+ European and African partners. Outputs 3 and 4 nevertheless opened opportunities for strengthened relationships between MAV+ partners and the support African institutions which led to the establishment of structured engagements as well as opportunities to participate in one another's events. It also led to the organisation of a set of study tours which opened possibilities for institutional twinning and collaboration.

Findings

- *Contribution to host capacity strengthening* – The support provided to Africa CDC and to AUDA-NEPAD through deployment of embedded TA was not specifically designed to strengthen the capacity of the host institution. As such the deployed TA performed a primarily policy advisory and programme implementation role, substituting for gaps in internal capacity, on behalf of the host institutions with any capacity building effects arising being a secondary benefit[32]. Given the workload that embedded experts were required to carry, addressing institutional strengthening needs would likely have been excessive. However, as noted already above under JC 2.2. and later under EQ 3 below, this approach has raised concerns for the sustainability of the work of embedded TAs and suggest that some greater attention to addressing internal capacity development challenges in the conceptualisation of TESS' support to partner institutions may have been desirable[33]. From an African institutional perspective, the view was expressed that direct recruitment of experts by the host institution rather than their mobilisation via a third-party agency could have better facilitated sustainability but could certainly not have guaranteed it.
- *Systems strengthening for Human Resources Development* – The work carried out by specific embedded TA deployed to Africa CDC and to AUDA-NEPAD nevertheless contributed to capacity development across the continent. This included the work on Talent Development carried out under the auspices of Africa CDC which focused on the establishment of Regional Capability and Capacity Networks (RCCNs) as well as fellowship programmes, as well as the work on Regulatory Capacity

[31] In the case of output 4, this is both a concern regarding AMA which is a newly established entity, but also for AUDA-NEPAD in terms of its ability to provide backstopping support to AMA

[32] It was noted however that outside the framework of TESS and MAV+, agencies such as GIZ are providing institutional support to Africa CDC as part of broader institutional strengthening support to the African Union. The core roles of embedded TA under Africa CDC are spelt out In the POM covering 5 key areas.

[33] This would have included the conduct of capacity assessments/ diagnostic exercises in order to inform the approach of support under outputs 3 and 4, during TESS's inception phase.

Development which was led by the embedded TA working under AUDA-NEPAD. Both cases provide examples of a systematic approach towards the development of frameworks and standards for supporting long term human resources development at continental, regional and country levels in areas related to drug manufacturing and distribution. The work included conducting comprehensive capacity needs assessment, labour market analysis and institutional mapping as well as broad-based consultation with stakeholders at national, regional and continental levels. This diagnostic work then led to formulation of frameworks, strategies, standard operating procedures (SoPs) and protocols as well as to on-going technical backstopping support.

- *Promoting EU-AU partnership* – The technical support provided to partner institutions was however expected to promote the overall partnership between Africa and Europe, by demonstrating through concrete actions, Europe's commitment to supporting the implementation of Africa's continental health agenda. At an operational level, the team of embedded TA enjoyed institutional backstopping support which also allowed for a certain interaction between TESS' implementing partners and the host institutions, including organisation of joint planning and review workshops, joint expert selection panels and joint participation in public events. Given the scope of output 3 (as compared to output 4), the implementing partner (GIZ) mobilised considerable staff support that served as the "oil in the wheels". Such collaboration was however not always successful, an example of which was an effort to put in place a PHAHM technical learning forum to bring together output 3 African and European stakeholders to share lessons of experience and promote joint learning. For a mix of institutional and technical reasons, this initiative was abandoned after two initial meetings. Meanwhile the 2023 Annual Progress report provides an example of the strengthened partnership and trust relationship between AUDA-NEPAD and MAV+ partners, through the institutionalisation of the African Medicine Regulatory Harmonization (AMRH)-TESS forum and through the invitation of MAV+ partners to attend various AUDA-NEPAD partner meetings including at the end of the first year of operations, the Scientific Conference on Medical Product Regulation in Africa (SCoMRA) meeting in Cairo in December 2023.

3.3.4 On Research and Analysis

JC 2.4: TESS delivered relevant and pertinent research findings and analytical work that responded to the needs of the different MAV+ workstreams and partners' agendas and priorities.

Summary

A key role of experts mobilised through STEP (output 1), working within the TESS PMU (under output 2) or embedded in African partner institutions (outputs 3 and 4) was to deliver policy advise and applied research findings that could benefit the work of MAV+ partners and African partners across the six workstreams.

The unanimous view of MAV+ clients interviewed is that TESS performed well in delivering relevant and pertinent expert advice and knowledge products through different types of analytical work and applied research[34]. The nature of advisory work varied considerably depending on the nature of requests received and the contexts within which experts found themselves working. For the experts working under outputs 1 and 2, it could take the form of preparing speaking notes and presentation materials, providing opinions and findings to support the formulation of dialogue positions, drafting concept notes, and commenting on-going project design work. It could also involve the conduct of more in-depth studies relating directly to the six MAV+ workstreams and priority themes of partner organisations. For the experts working under outputs 3 and 4, analytical work generally had more of an applied and operational focus linked to the design and development of systems and processes linked to the areas of work.

Several concerns have however been raised with respect to the way advice and knowledge has been utilised. One area of concern relates to the absorptive capacity of users to make adequate use of data and information generated. Another area of concern has been the lack of attention paid to processing

[34] As noted in the methodology section, the evaluation team did not review any specific pieces of work developed by experts. Therefore, the conclusions drawn here are based on feedback received from MAV+ stakeholders who have made use of TESS' expert advice.

knowledge generated into more digestible forms for uptake by policy makers and non-specialists and that could also facilitate broader dissemination.

Findings

- *A wide range of products and services delivered* – A core responsibility for TESS was to generate and deliver policy advice and technical research findings to the MAV+ community. As earlier reported (see under JC 2.2 above)., this was done on a demand-driven basis with requests received from DG INTPA, EUMS, African partners and to a growing extent from EUDs. The types of requests varied considerably and could be divided into two basic categories – those requiring a quick response and targeting on going policy discussions, technical design considerations or up-coming events, and those allowing for more in-depth analysis which could include conducting more in-depth studies aimed at generating new knowledge or synthesising existing knowledge. A third category included providing inputs and technical supports to initiatives such as study tours[35] and seminars. Over an 18 month period from July 2023 to December 2025 some 200 deliverables were generated by output 2 addressing topics related to the six MAV+ workstreams[36].
- *Servicing the needs of African partners* – The embedded TAs seconded to Africa CDC and to AUDA-NEPAD were responsible for leading priority areas of work identified by their hosts. As lead experts, they were counted on to deliver various forms of technical advisory support which overall had a more operational focus but which could also build on more detailed technical analyses. There are various examples whereby experts from outputs 1 and 2 moreover provided inputs to reinforce the work of the embedded experts such as in relation to vaccine manufacturing and on technology transfer. As reported elsewhere, African partners have expressed an overall high level of satisfaction with the quality of expertise provided, noting in particular that the embedded experts were leading experts in their field. At the same time, there were some few examples were services provided fell below expectations[37].
- *The growing demands from EUDs* – Over the three years of TESS's operations, there was a progressive increase in demands from EUDs for advisory support. Initially, EUDs were not fully aware of this potential source of expertise but in time recognised its value in supporting their in-country work where they themselves face capacity limitations in terms of having access to the needed expertise to support negotiations with partner country officials as well as to support programming and project design. Ghana, Rwanda and Egypt are identified as three countries where EUDs have requested on-going support.
- *Servicing the needs of DG INTPA and EUMS* – Experts mobilised through STEP and expertise provided by the output 2 team of experts were primarily involved in delivering support to MAV+ European partners and in particular to DG INTPA as contracting authority and overall MAV+ coordinator. The services provided covered the range mentioned above but with a particular need to provide short notice advisory inputs. As noted elsewhere, there was pressure to be demand-ready and to respond promptly to requests as they arose. Such demands could increase in the context of particular on-going policy processes and programming decisions and could become quite intense as was the case during the Belgian Presidency. Requests were also forthcoming for more in-depth analytical work, examples including studies on private sector engagement, and on a research and development investment case. DG INTPA and EUMS overall expressed satisfaction with the quality of advisory services provided, although DG INTPA underscored the need to strike a balance between TESS responding to specific member state needs and ensuring that delivered advice could benefit the MAV+ community at large in the spirit of Team Europe.
- *Limitations* – Two areas of concern were highlighted. First, that EUMS and DG INTPA were not always in a position to fully utilise the findings and advise generated due to their internal capacity constraints which resulted in delays in fully processing the advice provided. Second, that insufficient attention to knowledge management especially in terms of curation, summarising and dissemination so as to

[35] A set of three study tours and seminar series was developed in support of Africa CDC, EUDs and EUMS

[36] This figure is approximate and is based on data extracted from the 2023 and 2024 annual reports. The evaluation team was unable however to obtain data on deliverables produced during the course of 2025

[37] This was attributed in part to unsuitability of selected short term experts or delays in mobilisation of embedded experts to take up their posts, thereby leading to a delay in advancing the associated work programme.

facilitate access to and consumption of the considerable volumes of knowledge generated (as also discussed in the next sub-section).

3.3.5 On Monitoring, reporting and knowledge management

JC 2.5: TESS' monitoring and knowledge management systems facilitated the collection, analysis and dissemination of information and quality data in support of MAV+ coordination, progress monitoring and communication.

Summary

Monitoring, reporting, knowledge management and communications were integral parts of TESS's coordination function aimed at promoting coherence, transparency and learning across the MAV+ portfolio. Faced with some considerable constraints, inherent to information exchange and visibility among the large group of MAV+ stakeholders, these functions were nevertheless able to record some notable successes even if they were not able to develop these services to the level they might have wished. Undertaking these functions highlighted the limits of what a support structure is able to do while also revealing some of the challenges of coordination in a Team Europe context. EUMS representatives value some of the tools developed to promote reporting and transparency, in particular the dashboard, while the Communications function was particularly valued for its contribution to visibility and joint communications, including with African partners. Against these achievements, it proved difficult to achieve a more granular level of reporting, while initiatives that could have been taken to promote communication were constrained by slow decision-making and lack of clarity over mandate, roles and responsibilities.

Findings

- While some stakeholders interviewed consider that the M&E and communications functions[38] contributed to greater transparency and coordination among MAV+ partners including alignment of interventions and learning from practices, others expressed concern that while the actions carried out were significant, insufficient attention had been paid at the outset to clarifying expectations on how these functions would contribute to a better coordination of the MAV+ portfolio, from a strategic point of view. While, concept notes/ plans had been drafted for both, as part of the TESS' inception phase, they had a more operational rather than strategic focus. Below some key features, achievements and challenges are highlighted:
- *M&E tools that have promoted transparency and coherence* – Without doubt, the most popular M&E tool developed has been the online MAV+ *dashboard*[39] which provides the MAV+ European partners with an overview of technical data across the MAV+ portfolio. This practical tool, which builds on initial steps to harmonise key performance indicators across the portfolio and in line with the JIL is regularly consulted and updated and considered a practical way to encourage coordination and decision-making among the MAV+ community[40]. Related to the dashboard has been the publication of a *facts and figures* overview report summarising key achievements and trends. Other key products include a very comprehensive *annual progress report* detailing the activities and achievements across the four output areas. For external audiences, an annual *fact sheet* flyer has been produced providing a snapshot of main MAV+ achievements, while summaries of key events and initiatives have been periodically posted

[38] While the M&E unit supported the TESS PMU to report and account on the work of TESS, the focus of this section is on the role played by the unit to facilitate reporting on the achievements of the MAV+ portfolio. It is also noted in the POM that the Communications unit also played an external facilitating role to enhance the visibility and external relations of the MAV+ portfolio, and not to do for TESS itself, which by design was not expected to promote a separate identity.

[39] The team was informed the dashboard is being migrated to a more user-friendly interface. It was also noted that going forward the dashboard will incorporate results from the four other health hubs falling under the single health TEI.

[40] A concern was expressed over data quality which impacts on the accuracy of data presented on the dashboard. This concerns in particular the completeness of financial data from across the portfolio. Nevertheless the 2024 annual report lists increased financial oversight as an achievement.

to the Cap4dev website. Some stakeholders were of the view that more could have been done to communicate results to external audiences (see also below).

- *Some important achievements in the field of Communications* – Among the services provided by the Communications office, three are identified as having impacted the task of coordination. The first concerned the setting up of a *shared calendar* to encourage MAV+ partners to notify one another of key events and activities. This has proven to be popular with a good level of uptake among partners. The second concerns the setting up of a *Sharepoint* to access all MAV+ and TESS generated knowledge products. According to interviewees however, this has been generally under-utilised. It was suggested by one interviewee that there was an overall overproduction of knowledge and information but insufficient attention to its direction and use. This is attributed to lack of internal capacity to attend to the task of capitalisation and synthesising of the wealth of materials produced. It was also suggested that the authors of different pieces of work should have been tasked to summarise their work thereby reducing the workload on the communications office, alternatively to have had a dedicated budget to recruit an expert to perform this function[41]. Despite these constraints, other avenues existed for bringing new findings to the attention of MAV+ partners including through the monthly MAV+ meetings. The third concerns the production of a *monthly internal newsletter* that provides practical information on news and events, and which has been positively received.
- For *external* audiences, the communications office has worked with various MAV+ partner *social media accounts* to bring visibility to MAV+ activities and achievements and has also worked with both European and African partners to develop *joint communication statements* and social media packages in the context of international events and side-events. Noteworthy is that TESS itself does not control any communications channel and has been required to work closely with the relevant offices in DG INTPA and other partner organisations. Initiatives have also been taken to produce *videos* and take advantage of *photo opportunities* which has proven effective as ways to showcase initiatives and communicate to non-specialised audiences[42].
- *Limits and constraints* – Each function has been operationalised with a single staff member and a limited operational budget to mobilise additional expertise/ consultant services. This has placed a considerable workload on both officers given the potentially strategic importance of each function and their potential to both promote more joined-up action and to enhancing the visibility of MAV+ as a collective European and African endeavour[43]. However, the formation of M&E networks with focal points across MAV+ partners has helped in gathering information for the M&E officer and to function as a kind of sounding board in the on-going refinement of M&E products and services. Both offices have had to contend with uncertainties over the level to which partners have wished these functions to be developed, as discussed in the following bullet points:
    - For M&E, care has needed to be taken to avoid imposing heavy reporting demands on MAV+ members and to recognise EUMS' independence of action including matters of confidentiality. This has meant designing a system that is not too onerous from a compliance point of view and that focuses on areas of common interest, where partners are willing to engage. Delays in obtaining accurate data has resulted in delays in compiling, uploading and publishing data that could be useful for decision-making purposes[44].
    - For Communications, care has had to be exercised in understanding the different interests and incentives of MAV+ partners in promoting visibility, with an overall unclear mandate[45]. Care has also been required to distinguish what falls within the realms of political messaging as opposed to

[41] According to the POM, each Output lead is responsible for updating the content of the libraires, in coordination with the Communication Expert
[42] More information on the range of products delivered can be found on pages 18-19 of the 2024 Annual report.
[43] This is now even more the case in light of responsibility placed on TESS to service the larger single health TEI with five hubs.
[44] For example, in compiling data for the 2021-23 period, data was only received from 50 % of the 80 or so projects in the MAV+ portfolio so aggregated data remains incomplete.
[45] This has at times been exacerbated by having dual reporting lines. The 2024 annual report moreover remarks on the need to strengthen TESS' engagements with MAV+ partners to improve buy-in.

technical communications[46]. In relation to the above both offices have encountered a number of operational challenges including on the one hand, sometimes unclear or conflicting guidance from the PMU management and client (DG INTPA) and on the other hand, practical challenges in obtaining required information timeously and in an appropriate format from across the MAV+ portfolio. The 2024 annual report suggests that the workflow between DG INTPA and TESS in this regard was at the time not well defined. Insufficient clarity on the scope given to it to act pro-actively in order to seize opportunities for timely communications combined with at times lengthy approval procedures required before issuing any communications products has impacted on overall effectiveness. Overall, the collegial working with African partners towards development joint communications is highlighted.

3.4 EQ3

EQ3:

To what extent have the services delivered by TESS resulted in positive changes for MAV+ Team Europe members and African partner institutions, and to what extent have there been any unintended effects?

EQ 3 was examined from five perspectives that take into account the service delivery focus of TESS both towards its MAV+ European partners, primarily through outputs 1 and 2, as well as to its African partners via mainly outputs 3 and 4.



The overall conclusion is that TESS has recorded some important successes in promoting positive change in selected areas and in line with it mandated functions. With regard to support to European partners, the nature and extent of these achievements has depended to a considerable degree on the nature of demands received from its principals and their readiness to adopt the ensuing advice, guidance and tools developed by TESS, particularly in the areas of coordination of the MAV+ portfolio and in promoting coherent positions for policy dialogue and advocacy. Positive developments include adoption of a common monitoring and reporting framework, alignment of the MAV+ portfolio to a set of six core workstreams, and adoption of common communications tools as well as adoption of some common policy positions.

With respect to African partners, successes have depended substantially on the very good work of embedded TA and backstopping received from the TESS PMU, as well as the alignment of their work with host institution priorities. However, the weak institutional capacity of the host organisations has meant an overreliance on the embedded TA, which raises questions about the longer term sustainability of progress recorded. Key achievements include advancement of a continental wide talent development strategy for pharmaceutical manufacturing through the establishment of Regional Capability and Capacity Networks, as well as progress recorded in strengthening the regulatory environment for pharmaceutical production and distribution including enhancing the role of Regional Centres for Regulatory Excellence.

Beyond intended effects, two interesting unintended effects are noted, which are potentially instructive for learning on how best to manage Team Europe initiatives.

[46] An example of this concerns striking the right balance between promoting Europe's current external action policy priorities – namely Team Europe and Global Gateway – while also communicating Europe's commitment to partnership and alignment with a partner-led agenda.

3.4.1 On Governance and Partnership

JC 3.1: TESS has informed and supported MAV+ Team Europe members to make informed decisions with respect to priorities, approaches and actions.

Summary

TESS's contribution towards achieving a more coordinated MAV+ portfolio is acknowledged by MAV+ partners and is considered to have been one of its main achievements. Expectations as to how coordinated MAV+ should be vary but the general understanding is that whereas steps to achieve a higher level of strategic coherence and shared policy priorities among partners is desirable, respect for individual partners right to act unilaterally remains critical. In this regard, partners point to the value of the MAV+ dashboard and shared calendar as having contributed to enhanced coordinated action, value the contribution of the communications unit towards enhancing their visibility and messaging under a Team Europe branding and appreciate the generation of knowledge and analysis that has helped partners to make informed decisions and arrive at consensus on particular topics. TESS' logistical support in preparation and facilitation of events is also recognised for helping to bring partners together around policy and strategic discussions. This includes the preparatory work for the high level meetings with African partners which have grown in stature and significance over time. TESS has therefore helped realise the underlying ambition of TEIs to ensure the sum is greater than the individual parts. However, incentives and practical constraints have precluded the achievement of a higher level of joined up action. Incoherences within the portfolio therefore remain while a certain tension continues to exist between commitment to a harmonised approach and retaining independence of action. There is also the view in some quarters that more could have been achieved if the OSC, (and through its linkages with the MAV+ management) had provided greater strategic direction on the expectations for and extent of desired coordination among MAV+ partners.

Findings

- *Towards greater overall coherence of the MAV+ portfolio* – DG INTPA which has been the primary client and beneficiary of TESS support under output 1 expressed a high level of satisfaction with the overall contribution of TESS to putting in place a coordinated approach for the management of the MAV+ portfolio. It noted moreover the challenging and fast changing institutional environment which TESS had to contend with, making the achievements recorded all the more significant. That said the work of TESS falls short of having been transformational and should rather be viewed as helping to reduce the transaction costs for partners to collaborate around shared objectives within the context of MAV+. The complexity of the aid landscape with multiple channels/ envelopes of funding and a plethora of projects initiated from different sources underscores the challenges involved in reaching an advanced level of coordinated action within MAV+ and among partners. As a result, a certain degree of incoherence is likely to remain.
- *Shared management of workstreams* – Against this background, an important achievement has been the ability to align the projects of different funders within the MAV+ portfolio with one or more of the six workstreams. This has allowed for a certain packaging of initiatives, to better identify opportunities for alignment and complementarity and to facilitate reporting. The agreement reached at the 2025 annual planning workshop to assign individual MAV+ partners to lead on a particular workstream is further evidence of the progress made to work more harmoniously, facilitated in large part by the work of TESS.
- *Readiness to project a Team Europe Brand* – The work of TESS' communications unit in raising the visibility of MAV+ and the Team Europe brand reflected a general readiness on the part of MAV+ partners to advance this agenda. However, the task of doing so was not straightforward and required sensitivity to accommodating and balancing the institutional interests and perspectives of the various actors involved. The topic of visibility and branding brought to the fore the intrinsic challenges facing

the Team Europe approach of balancing collective and individual interests and the need therefore for an appreciation of the MAV+ political and geo-political landscape.

- *Shared reporting and knowledge sharing* – As reported under EQ 2, TESS's M&E unit successfully set up a reporting framework that encouraged reporting against a set of core indicators linked to the JIL. The tool was developed collaboratively, and indications are that partners welcome the tool which moreover feeds the dashboard function which is regularly consulted. MAV+ partners have also welcomed the substantial body of knowledge that has been generated by TESS experts, although concerns have been raised about the absorptive capacity of partners to fully utilise the available knowledge. Partners however acknowledge that the knowledge produced in various forms has both supported decision making of individual partners as well as helping MAV+ partners to reach collective decisions including on how to engage with their African partners (see further below). It is also clear that in the absence of TESS, the range and quantum of technical knowledge demanded by MAV+ partners could not have been generated.
- *But absence of a strategic focus and readiness for joint planning/ programming* – Concern was raised that despite the noted improvements in alignment, and steps made to identify joint priorities – as reflected in the JIL – insufficient attention was paid by MAV+ partners to developing a more strategic orientation for MAV+ and that the opportunity to capitalise on the wealth of knowledge generated through TESS technical experts was missed. However, it is not clear if this was mainly due to supply side issues or to lack of demand for such guidance emanating from MAV+ partners. It was noted in this regard that the OSC focused disproportionately on administrative issues and gave only limited attention to more strategic discussions reflecting possibly a more general lack of readiness among partners to engage in more intense strategic reflection. It was also evident that there was no appetite for joint planning and programming and rather preference for maintaining a looser form of coordinated action.

3.4.2 On dialogue and speaking with one voice

JC 3.2: TESS has enhanced MAV+ Team Europe members' engagement and leverage in policy dialogue with African stakeholders.

Summary

One of the more obvious areas of achievement relates to the projection of common positions among MAV+ European partners in their communications and exchanges with African partners and the wider international community. TESS is credited for having facilitated this ambition by working in the background to ensure provision of technical information and policy advice, by providing logistical support in the design and hosting of events and through development of communications products. Ultimately the readiness to seek common ground and to speak with one voice has rested with the MAV+ partners but their ability to do so has been facilitated by the work of TESS. Events such as the annual HLSM have been used to present a common European position in discussions with African partners, including for example specific positions with regard to issues of access to medical products. Notwithstanding these achievements, individual MAV+ members continue to conduct bilateral discussions with their African partners as part of their legitimate external/ international engagements and reserve the right to do so with a certain confidentiality. From an African partner perspective, engaging around a common platform of positions is welcome even if at an operational level, there is still a need to engage bilaterally.

Findings

- *Joint messaging and common positions* – Joint messaging and speaking with a common policy position in dialogue with its African partners has been identified as one of the notable achievements of MAV+. This may be attributed to the behind-the-scenes work of TESS, including information sharing and

preparation of technical analysis, which is generally recognised for having facilitated these achievements. At the same time, the achievements recorded reflect the readiness of MAV+ partners to collaborate at a policy level on advancing collective positions, while at the same time reserving their right to pursue policy exchanges with African partners on a bilateral basis, reflecting national priorities and strategies.

- *Visibility and engagement* – MAV+ partners commend TESS for enhancing the overall visibility of MAV+ through its active engagement in international fora and building networks with different agendas, something that DG INTPA and member states have not been able to do with the same level of intensity. This achievement is moreover highlighted in the 2024 Annual Progress report. The communications unit of TESS is appreciated for the work done to facilitate the crafting of press releases and other communications around such events which has helped project a Team Europe voice. TESS is also recognised for its input into preparing the annual HLSM meetings that bring together European and African policy makers. Beyond the considerable logistical support provided to ensure such events run smoothly, TESS generated important technical resources to support discussions, was active in consolidating outputs and in accompanying events with social media notifications, news items and press releases on behalf of MAV+ European and African partners. This is considered to have generated benefits beyond immediate visibility to strengthen the underlying partnership. African partners remarked on the success of the HLSM in terms of level of participation and quality of strategic discussions.

3.4.3 On capacity strengthening and adoption of innovative practices

JC 3.3: TESS support to African institutional partners has facilitated the adoption of innovative practices and the review/ reform/ adoption of regulations across countries of implementation.

Summary

TESS' support to African partners channelled through outputs 3 and 4 (and with additional inputs from outputs 1 and 2) have recorded several significant achievements, which have been recognised by the African host institutions. While support to Africa CDC was spread across the different elements of the Framework for Action (FFA), the most notable achievements were recorded in the areas of Talent Development and in particular the establishment of RCCNs. Support to the AMRH / AMA, channelled through AUDA-NEPAD focused on various aspects of regulatory strengthening. Success was achieved with respect to the development of policy and operational frameworks for capacity strengthening of national regulatory authorities across the continent. Levels of achievement were however constrained by the limited backstopping capacity of host institutions and at time administrative bottlenecks on the part of TESS. Support from TESS did not directly address (absorptive) capacity challenges facing the host institutions, during the design of interventions, which has put at risk the sustainability of the achievements recorded.

Findings

- *A spread of action areas* – Through the work of embedded TA and with support of other TESS experts, notable progress has been made in advancing selected priority workstreams of Africa CDC and AUDA-NEPAD. With experts assigned across the 6 workstreams of Africa CDC, progress has been recorded across most priority areas, however, the progress and results achieved have varied from workstream to workstream. In part this was attributed to delays in identifying suitable experts (eg: finance and technology transfer) with the result that certain workstreams have taken longer to take off. From the perspective of Africa-CDC stakeholders, the contribution of a number of the embedded experts has been transformational, likening the experts to "pioneers" who have helped translate general concepts and ambitions into operational programmes that have a continent-wide impact that are also expected

to enable more effective use of other MAV+ project inputs. In the case of AUDA-NEPAD, only one embedded TA was deployed to work on a single workstream, however here also, significant achievements have been recorded.

- *Talent development* for *pharmaceutical manufacturing*- This workstream championed by Africa CDC with the support of a TESS embedded TA has been identified as a major success. Of note has been the establishment of three RCCNs across the continent as well as the establishment of two fellowship programmes (see Box 1 below). These regional initiatives combined with the overall guidance provided by Africa CDC has helped put in place normative frameworks for coordination and standards setting in the realm of human resources development for the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. Whilst still in its infancy, the work represents a critical milestone in structuring an African led approach that it is hoped will also help reduce the current fragmentation of efforts taking place at country level.

Box 1: A trio of initiatives to promote workforce development for Vaccine Manufacturing

With the support of TESS' embedded expert, Africa CDC has launched three initiatives to promote workforce development across the continent.

1. Regional Capability and Capacity Networks (RCCNs)

RCCNs have three main objectives: (i) Establish and operate sustainable training programmes to build and maintain a skilled workforce for the vaccine manufacturing ecosystem in the regions and the continent (ii) increase the relevance of sustainably funded training and educational programmes to evolving industry needs (iii) incentivize R&D activities across Africa. Their work will be guided by Africa CDC's vaccine R&D and vaccine manufacturing competency frameworks and will implement its Business and Operational Models for African Biomanufacturing Training Initiatives.

2. Africa CDC Biomanufacturing Fellowship programme

The fellowship programme aims to increase the number of biomanufacturing training programmes and upskilling opportunities for biomanufacturing staff on the continent. It will develop competence specialisations in biomanufacturing and provide the hands-on training needed to produce a best-in-class workforce and leaders in Africa's biomanufacturing industry. The programme will equip employees of biomanufacturing companies with the advanced competencies outlined in the Vaccine R&D and Vaccine Manufacturing Competency Framework and will equip participants with knowledge and skills in leadership, mentorship, management, resource enterprise planning, and entrepreneurship.

3. Africa CDC Industrial Fellowship programme

Africa CDC, in collaboration with the African Vaccine Manufacturing Initiative (AVMI), launched a structured industrial fellowship programme in vaccine manufacturing in 2025. This will enable recent relevant graduates to acquire industrial technical skills and make them readily employable by the vaccine manufacturing institutions in line with Vaccine R&D and Vaccine Manufacturing Competency Frameworks. The fellows will be placed at an active vaccine manufacturing institution in one of the following countries: Egypt, Senegal, or South Africa.

Source: Africa CDC

- *Regulatory capacity development* – The work of the embedded TA working on behalf of AUDA-NEPAD and specifically with the technical committee on regulatory development, has focused on developing frameworks and standards for capacity strengthening of national regulatory agencies. The work has included the development of guidance, standards and training materials to support country level in-service training of regulatory experts. Steps have also been taken to strengthen Regional Centres of Regulatory Excellence (RCOREs) that coordinate training at regional and country level, akin to the RCCNs established by Africa CDC but with a focus on in-service training in the regulatory sector[47]. It has also supported the institutionalisation of the capacity building/ training function within African Medicines Regulatory Harmonisation Programme (AMRHP) under AUDA-NEPAD and most recently to

[47] Regional Centres of Regulatory Excellence (RCOREs) are designated institutions established by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) under the AMRH initiative. They build a sustainable, highly skilled regulatory workforce for medical products across Africa through partnerships between academic bodies and National Medicines Regulatory Authorities (NMRAs).

its transfer into the recently established Africa Medicines Agency (AMA) in Kigali[48]. AUDA-NEPAD also highlight TESS' contribution to the development of an M&E system to track progress in human resources development in the regulatory sector across the continent, which is described as a "game-changer", as well as the development of a digitalised needs assessment tool that can be consulted by potential funders to identify possible areas for support at country, regional and continental levels.

- *Other achievements* – Achievements have been recorded in other areas including supporting the establishment of a unit at Africa CDC to drive the newly established African Pooled Procurement Mechanism (APPM). The coming into being of the unit can be attributed in part to the work of TESS's embedded expert on market shaping with additional technical inputs provided through output 2 and provides an example of where TESS has been able to contribute to institutional development within the Africa CDC. TESS has also contributed to setting up the African Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Information Network or PPRI (see Box 2 below).

Box 2: The African Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Information Network (PPRI)

Established in 2025, the PPRI connects 14 African countries with the Africa CDC and World Health Organization (WHO) African Region to collaborate on sustainable medicine pricing, policy, and reimbursement strategies in order to standardise the cost of medicines so as to increase healthcare equity across the continent. The network's secretariat is hosted by the Pharmacoeconomics Department of the Austrian National Public Health Institute which is a WHO Collaborating Centre for Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Policies).

Source: PPRI Secretariat

- *Sustainability* – The sustainability of the achievements noted above has however been raised as a concern, highlighting also some of the limitations of the embedded TA modality. While Africa CDC remarked on the tremendous achievements recorded in a comparatively short period of time it noted that considerably more time would be needed to fully institutionalise the systems and processes that have been set up. Concerns include the readiness of host institutions to replace the embedded TA with experts who can carry forward the achievements recorded to date[49]. This reflects both budgetary and staffing constraints facing host institutions as well as availability of the specialised skills akin to those of the embedded experts[50]. Similar challenges are identified with AMA, an entirely new entity with a challenging mandate but with limited human and financial resources[51]. Beyond the host institutions themselves, the structures, frameworks, systems, and processes that have been established at regional level will need to be funded in order to meet recurring operational and staff costs[52].

[48] According to the 2024 Progress Report, the embedded expert led the AMRH Technical Committee on Regulatory capacity development, significantly strengthening AMRH's technical capacity as a technical lead for the operationalization of the AMA.

[49] It was noted that there were no provisions for a staff member to shadow the work of the embedded expert and to allow the expert to mentor CDC staff members to eventually take over responsibilities.

[50] The 2024 Progress report notes the capacity constraints facing Africa CDC PHAHM secretariat impacting implementation efficiency

[51] According to sources consulted, while the work area enjoys AMA leadership attention, there will continue to be capacity challenges in the short to medium term as the entity becomes fully operational.

[52] For example, SOPs have been developed to ensure that regional bodies guide human resources development endeavours in an appropriate way and according to agreed standards. This includes for example ensuring correct selection of candidates for training and ensuring post-training follow-ups so that skills developed and applied in the workplace.

3.4.4 On Equitable access

JC 3.4: TESS support and implementation processes have contributed indirectly to increasing equitable access to quality health products in Africa.

Summary

TESS' support to the promotion of equitable access may be noted in some areas of its work but it has not to date formed a leading focus of attention. A significant development, however, has been the recent drafting of a policy note on access which if adopted by MAV+ partners will require all MAV+ projects to be more sensitive to and pro-active in addressing access issues, even though access has always been one of the overarching objectives of MAV+. The focus of TESS' output 4 on regulatory environment is explicitly driven by a concern for promotion of access to health products and therefore represents the main thrust of TESS's work on equitable access. Other areas of TESS technical work on the enabling environment and manufacturing capacity conducted by short and long term experts across the four output areas may be considered to have indirectly contributed to aspects of access but this cannot be easily quantified.

Findings

- Consideration of equitable access and in particular tackling barriers to access as a guiding principle informing the work of TESS is only a recent phenomenon although the topic has been an underlying objective of the work of output 4. It has moreover been one of the overarching objectives of MAV+. The main ways in which the topic of access has been articulated in the work of TESS are highlighted below.

- *Policy on Access* – In 2025, at the request of DG INTPA and EUMS, TESS drafted a policy note on ways to mainstream access as a cross-cutting theme across all MAV+ projects. This included development of a set of screening criteria for assessing compliance with access considerations. The paper was discussed at the 2025 MAV+ partners workshop and is now with partners to take forward. The expectation is that the policy note will be presented at the next HLSM for adoption. This initiative provides a good example of MAV+ partners working towards adoption of a common position but also highlights the time required for consultation and eventual adoption. Until the policy note is adopted, there is no other policy statement that guides MAV+ to address equitable access as a cross-cutting issue across all programmes.
- *Output 4* – Internal to the work of TESS, output 4's work on strengthening the regulatory environment is informed by concerns to promote equitable access to health products[53]. While access is influenced by a multiplicity of factors, the regulatory environment plays a critical role in creating common rules and standards across the continent that impact on production, quality, and pricing among others. While focused on a specific component of regulatory environment strengthening, through human resources and capacity building, the work of output 4 represents an important contribution to the overall task and has helped position AMA as an authority in this domain.
- *Other inputs across output areas* – Experts working under output 2 and to a lesser extent short term experts from output 1 have also addressed access issues through analytical work on pricing, procurement, manufacturing and R&D capacity among others, highlighting the fact that access issues need to be tackled from different complementary angles. The policy note on access is expected to provide a framework to better understand and align the linkages between these different angles. Some initial overlaps between the work of outputs 2 and 4 have been reportedly resolved.

[53] According to the POM, output 4 focuses on strengthening equitable access to quality health products beside the vaccine production. It aims at strengthening the capacities of African actors (public and private) contribute in the setup of a market for quality, affordable and sufficient health products in Africa, both for locally produced medicines and vaccines and for imported products.

3.4.5 On Unintended effects

JC 3.5: TESS support has generated (positive and/ or negative) unintended effects on the Team Europe Approach, that fall outside the scope of expected results.

Summary

There are few unintended effects to report from the work of TESS. Of those identified in this evaluation, the most significant concerns the unintended visibility and stature of TESS itself, which led to a certain misconception in some circles that TESS represented or was the mouthpiece of DG INTPA and EUMS blurring the distinction between technical and political roles. A second unintended effect relates to the positive learning that arose across the three technical agencies, which benefitted both the individual interests and positioning of each agency as well as providing practical lessons on the challenges and opportunities of working collectively as implementing partners in a Team Europe context. Yet this positive learning is in part counter-balanced by the risks of individual institutional interests overshadowing collective interests and undermining efforts to project TESS as an integrated facility pursuing shared objectives through a common modus operandi.

Findings

The evaluation was only able to identify a couple of unintended effects that were of any significance, and as highlighted below:

- *TESS visibility* – As reported through this report, TESS has been highly performing. It has been particularly effective in raising the visibility of MAV+ within the international community and in building networks across the sector. It has also generated a considerable number of technical studies, as well as supporting engagements with key African institutional partners through its deployment of embedded TA. It has done so on behalf of and on instruction of its clients – the community of MAV+ partners and in particular DG INTPA. However, TESS's successes in executing its mandate have resulted in some stakeholders perceiving it to be the representative mouthpiece/ spokesperson for its principals rather than as a technical support agency. This has at times created confusion and tensions particularly when TESS has been referenced as presenting a position or view that has not been endorsed by its clients. This may be considered to be a negative unforeseen effect emanating from what is otherwise a positive overall finding. It highlights the challenges facing TESS of acting proactively while also recognising the limits of its own agency. For DG INTPA and EUMS, the challenge is that it created TESS precisely because they themselves lack the capacity to be engaged at the level of intensity required and therefore have benefitted from TESS's presence. Mediating the fine line between what is deemed political and what is deemed technical remains an on-going challenge.
- *Managing collective and individual interests* – The bringing together of three EUMS technical cooperation agencies to deliver the TESS mandate presented an unprecedented lesson in operationalising the Team Europe concept. On the positive side, it demonstrated the value-addition of bringing together the different institutional capabilities and networks of the three organisations in support of a common agenda that no single agency might have been able to deliver on its own. It moreover created opportunities for cross-institutional learning and collaboration, opening up prospects for further collaboration in a Team Europe perspective. On the less positive side, it demonstrated that individual institutional interests and accountabilities can overwhelm collective interests which can result in dysfunctions at an operational level that can impact on coherence and impact. It could also result in individual institutional interests taking precedence over collective interests in the context of networking, resource mobilisation and visibility.

3.5 EQ4

EQ 4:

To what extent has TESS addressed cross-cutting dimensions?

This EQ was addressed from two perspectives: i) attention to gender and rights and ii) attention to environment, as cross-cutting issues.



The overall conclusion is that the cross-cutting issues of gender, rights and environment have not been systematically addressed across the work of TESS, largely because the team of TESS experts were not asked to tackle these issues in an explicit manner. TESS has addressed the cross-cutting dimensions of gender, rights and environment in an implicit rather than explicit way. While attention to these issues were guided by the respective policies, rules and procedures of the respective European and African partners as well as those of the implementing partners involved, there were few explicit demands placed on TESS to address these dimensions across the four output areas. The only exception to this concerns output 4 which in a broad sense aimed to promote access to health products through strengthening of regulatory frameworks for drug manufacturing, pricing and distribution. The other interesting development is the drafting by TESS of a policy paper on behalf of MAV+ partners which proposes to mainstream the topic of access across the MAV+ portfolio of projects, but approval of this document is still pending. There are some other examples were aspects of gender, rights and environment were taken into account, but this was on more of an ad hoc basis.

3.5.1 On Gender and Human Rights mainstreaming

JC 4.1: Human rights and gender equality issues have been addressed systematically in the design, implementation and monitoring of TESS interventions.

Summary

The attention paid to gender and human rights in the work of TESS was implicit rather than explicit. Activities undertaken across the output areas were guided by the applicable gender and rights policies of the implementing agencies and their funders, as well as of their African host partners. However, the output areas generally lacked clearly stated objectives with regard to gender and rights, with the exception of output 4 which in its conceptualisation was designed to promote rights to access health products in the widest sense. Aspects of gender mainstreaming were observable in the M&E work (gender disaggregation of data), in attention to gender balance in the organisation of training and events, and in the promotion of capacity and capability frameworks under output 3. The drafting of a policy note on access advocating for mainstreaming of access across all MAV+ projects constitutes the most deliberate effort to advance rights issues, but this has not yet been adopted.

Findings

- *Implicit rather than explicit attention to gender and rights* – Key informants advised that gender and rights did not receive explicit attention in the work of TESS. As such few specific requests were received to tackle gender and rights issues as substantive topics and there were no specific budget lines reserved for tackling these dimensions. However, they were implicitly addressed as cross-cutting issues

in so far as the work carried out observed the underlying institutional policies of funders, implementing agencies and partner organisations towards addressing gender and rights.

- *Attention to gender in M&E, training and events* – This meant for example that the M&E system and associated reporting ensured that data was disaggregated according to gender where possible, whilst issues of rights were taken account of in general, in relation to reporting on levels of access. Training and workshop events would meanwhile aim to achieve gender balance in terms of participation, although here it was noted that the pharmaceutical research and development sector is heavily male-biased, making gender parity in participation in the short-term difficult to achieve.
- *Rights as an intrinsic objective of output 4* – The focus of output 4 on equitable access was guided by an underlying concern to address issues related to rights in the context of broadening access to essential and safe health products across the African continent. Therefore, the work on strengthening the regulatory environment for drug manufacturing, pricing and distribution can be regarded as a contribution towards promoting rights. More recent work of output 2 on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) has also touched on dimensions of rights and gender in the context of discussion on access to health products.
- *The draft policy on access* – As earlier reported, a draft policy note prepared by TESS on equitable access is currently under review by MAV+ partners. If adopted, the policy note would ensure that all future MAV+ projects address access as a key cross-cutting issue. A set of screening/ assessment criteria for compliance with an equitable access perspective is proposed[54].

3.5.2 On Environmental awareness

JC 4.2: TESS has systematically promoted awareness and prevention of potentially negative environmental side effects related to production and testing of medical products.

Summary

Attention to environmental issues has not featured in any significant way in the work of TESS and was only addressed in a few areas of work. To some limited extent, environmental concerns were addressed in the work of output 2 and output 3 experts reflecting the fact that few requests were received from MAV+ partners to directly address environmental concerns. The main area where it has arisen is in the context of MAV+ support for developing manufacturing capacity.

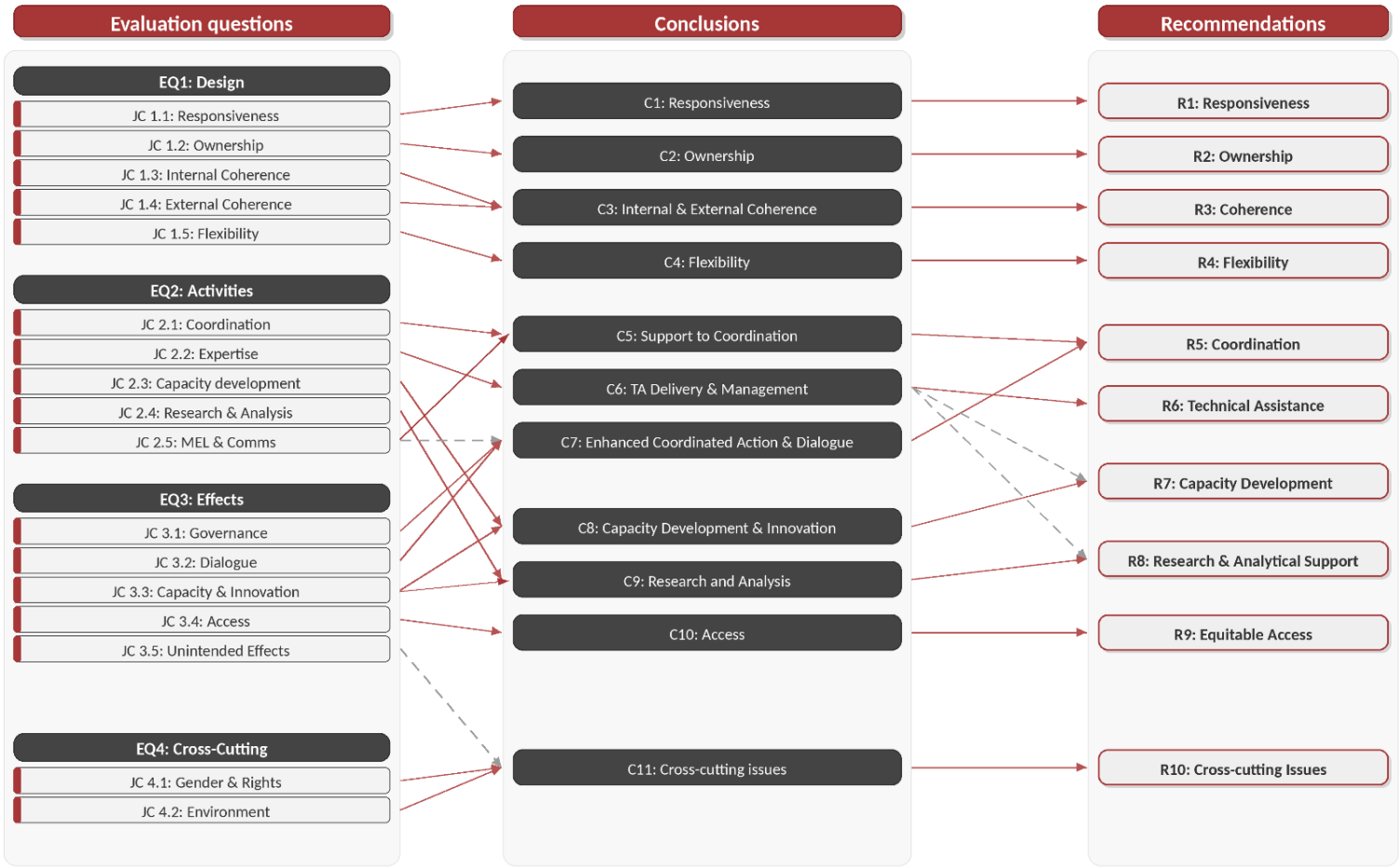
Findings

- *Attention to Environmental issues* – According to TESS experts, environmental issues have not featured in the work of TESS primarily because few requests were received to address it. It has therefore been addressed in an ad hoc manner, with for example output 2 recalling having only received a single request over the three years. The expert working on talent development under output 3, however, remarked that concerns about the environmental impact of drug manufacturing has led to consideration of developing a specific module on the topic for inclusion in the training courses and curricula that are under design. Indeed, the conclusion drawn is that environmental issues are most likely to arise in the specific context of work on pharmaceutical manufacturing. Also to note is that there are no indicators linked to environmental concerns that are being captured in the MAV+ M&E system.

[54] The team was also informed that in the context of the development of this policy note, DG INTPA has recruited a FTE to work exclusively on issues of equitable access.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Figure 3: Links between EQs, Conclusions and Recommendations



Source: Evaluation Team

This section presents conclusions and recommendations which build on the findings presented in the previous section. The section is organised as follows: A set of eleven conclusions are proposed which build on one or more of the evaluation findings contained in the JCs. For each conclusion presented (with one exception), an accompanying recommendation is proposed.[55]

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion No 1: On Responsiveness – TESS proved to be an appropriate and necessary tool to help MAV+ partners to better coordinate a complex and multi-dimensional TEI – a task that could not easily have been achieved without a support structure being in place. However, the mandate given to TESS went beyond what may normally be considered the brief of a support facility by including a TA delivery role that benefitted MAV+'s European and African partners. This helped to project the role of TESS as both internally and externally focused and helped reinforce the AU-EU health partnership. But it placed considerable demands on TESS management to maintain internal coherence.

Conclusion No 2: On Ownership – TESS enjoyed a generally high level of ownership across the MAV+ community which included both European and African partners, but the nature of ownership differed. European partners regarded TESS as a resource at their disposal to promote Team Europe and to service their individual and collective needs. The composition of the OSC reflected this perspective. African partners regarded TESS as a trusted partner, with whom they had jointly developed support projects but were neither invited to, nor expected to be more directly involved in its oversight. They moreover recognise TESS' contribution towards facilitating the overall EU-AU partnership.

Conclusion No 3: On Internal and external Coherence – Considerable management effort was required to assure the internal coherence of TESS, which overall was achieved. On the one hand, the dual mandate given to TESS meant having to combine different internal capabilities, modus operandi and management requirements suited to facilitating the coordination of the MAV+ portfolio while simultaneously delivering TA support. On the other hand, the choice taken to mobilise three technical cooperation agencies to operate TESS meant finding ways to manage at times competing institutional interests and understanding of mandate, while also harnessing the comparative advantage of each organisation. Provisions of the POM, the extensive inception phase to clarify vision and modus operandi and efforts of individual staff efforts at cross-output learning and collaboration helped build the needed internal coherence.

By contrast, there were few issues related to TESS' external coherence and strategic positioning as its role had been clearly framed as exclusively servicing the needs of MAV+ partners. Its interactions with other structures supporting related global, regional and national initiatives were done largely on a collegial basis and focused on knowledge and information sharing. African host institutions as well as their European partners in TESS were responsible for aligning support provided with other donor interventions and to ensure coherence wherever possible.

Conclusion No 4: On Flexibility – TESS proved itself to be able to adjust to changing circumstances and new demands even though this placed considerable strain on staff. Annual review processes, including updating of the risk matrix, and lesson learning, as well as on-going exchanges with the contract holder DG INTPA, OSC members, and African partners allowed TESS to make adjustments as required. Most notably this included extending the scope of its support beyond MAV+ to support

[55] In the final version of this report, the recommendations will be structured according to the Enabel template for recommendations.

the new integrated health TEI. However, the underlying MPCA contract specifying mandate, roles and modus operandi placed certain limits to the scale of adjustments and adaptations that could be made. TESS staff in particular proved capable to respond to unforeseen and at times short notice requests for assistance, that proved a key capability for a demand-driven entity.

Conclusion No 5: On Delivering Coordination Support and Speaking with one voice – MAV+ European partners have benefitted from the coordination support provided by TESS through services delivered mainly through outputs 1 and 2. TESS was however confronted with some uncertainty regarding the degree of coordination that MAV+ partners sought. Various coordination tools and instruments were developed but the extent of their use depended on the readiness of MAV+ partners to be coordinated. This was not known at the outset, and it was only through adopting a learning by doing approach that the desired level of coordination was identified. This was particularly the case with respect to monitoring and reporting and with communications. Without any executive authority of its own to require adoption of tools and instruments, and needing to remain demand driven, TESS relied on the requests received from partners, clarity on roles and responsibilities and the collective readiness of MAV+ European partners to adopt the tools and instruments developed. In the case of communications, particular attention was needed to understand the institutional interests and motivations of the partners involved.

MAV+ European partners have equally benefitted from TESS assistance to speak with one voice in their engagements with African partners and beyond. The ability to formulate common positions and craft common policy statements and communications is highly valued by MAV+ partners and is considered one of the most significant benefits of the Team Europe approach. This has been possible due in particular to the technical advisory inputs provided by members of the output 2 team as well as support provided by the communications unit. The delivery of this support encountered challenges along the way as documented elsewhere and, as with coordination in general, the level of achievement realised depended ultimately on the willingness of European partners to collaborate and seek compromise.

Conclusion No 6: On Delivering Expertise – The delivery of technical expertise was a core responsibility of TESS and featured across all four output areas in one form or another. The different tools employed to deliver expertise allowed for a differentiated approach to respond to a variety of needs and clients. This TA "toolbox" comprising short term, long term and embedded experts has generally performed well but each encountered operational challenges that impacted on their respective efficiency and effectiveness. A certain effort was also made to link up the different TA tools to address common tasks, but administrative bottlenecks linked to TESS' tripartite structure made this difficult to achieve at times, although individual initiative did generate some positive examples of collaboration.

Conclusion No 7: On Enhanced Coordinated Action & Dialogue – The contribution TESS has made to enhancing the coordination of the MAV+ portfolio is recognised by MAV+ partners. This is attributed to the work of output 1 particularly on process dimensions and on the work of output 2 on substantive policy advice. To a lesser extent the backward linkages from outputs 3 and 4 have helped identify opportunities for more coordinated action. As a result of TESS's support. MAV+ partners have today a better understanding of one another's work, a readiness to contribute to a common reporting mechanism, have been able to make more informed decisions based on advisory support provided, and have taken significant steps to enhance collective visibility. In combination these measures have contributed to a more joined up approach and have served as a stepping stone towards achieving a higher level of coordination. Whether that happens will however depend on the

readiness and willingness of the MAV+ partners involved and moreover needs to be considered in the context of the single integrated health TEI.

TESS has also facilitated MAV+ European partners to speak with one voice. This has been achieved through its secretariat support, through evidence generated from the joint reporting system and through its furnishing of technical advice and evidence to support collective decision making and communications. The communications function performed a particularly supportive role in coming up with means to project common messages and positions. African partners appreciate the growing coherence of the European voice, which has contributed to enhanced policy dialogue as reflected in strategic interactions, notably the most recent HLSM.

Conclusion No 8: On Capacity Development and Innovation on the African Continent – Through mainly outputs 3 and 4, TESS contributed to strengthening the pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution eco-system in Africa through targeted support delivered to Africa CDC, AUDA-NEPAD and AMA. The contributions helped put in place a number of building blocks for constructing an enabling environment for drug manufacturing and access on the continent. This has been achieved primarily through the deployment of embedded TA who facilitated the implementation of selected priority programmes of their host institutions. In a number of areas African partners consider TESS' contribution to have been transformational, by helping to translate ideas and concepts into concrete operational programmes on the ground, with benefits felt at national, regional and continental levels.

Embedded TA performed the role of strategic gap-fillers, offering specialised expertise and making up for gaps in the capacity of the host institutions. These experiences demonstrate that this modality of support can make an impact when their expertise and terms of reference align with the partners interest and priorities, and where sufficient backstopping support is also provided. However, insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that their work could be sustained by the host institution upon termination of their assignments. This places a risk on the sustainability of their interventions, despite being well grounded in broader policy and strategic frameworks.

Conclusion No 9: On Research and Analytical Support to MAV+ Partners – Through expertise mobilised via outputs 1 and 2, TESS delivered a stream of research findings and analytical support to MAV+ partners comprising DG INTPA, EUMS, African partner institutions and EUDS. Requests for support varied considerably ranging from short term advisory inputs to the generation of more elaborate research assignments. The heterogeneity of demands, which included both planned and un-planned requests placed considerable pressure on TESS to remain responsive, and demand driven, while at the same time remaining strategic and focused. TESS' various clients have expressed a generally high level of satisfaction with the pertinence and quality of analytical work and advice provided. Of note is a shifting pattern of demand with increasing number of requests from EUDs who have recognised the value of TESS technical support in helping delegations prepare for negotiations with their counterparts and in programming and formulation work.

Despite overall achievements, challenges have been encountered. These include an overburdening of requests which proved difficult to manage, insufficient absorptive capacity of clients to make full use of advice provided, at times concerns that benefits were too narrowly defined from the perspective of a particular client rather than serving the wider MAV+ community. Insufficient attention was also paid to synthesising and distilling the wealth of analytical/ research outputs generated which could have benefitted less specialised audiences and ensured policy relevance.

Conclusion No 10: On Equitable Access – Equitable access as an area of policy concern for the MAV+ community gained attention over the life of TESS. This is reflected in the shift from it being treated as a guiding principle for TESS' output 4 work on strengthening the regulatory environment to it being proposed for mainstreaming across all aspects of MAV+ work. This is a significant achievement which can be attributed in part to the technical work carried out by TESS to produce a policy note on the topic, at the request of MAV+ partners. However, it would be premature to attribute TESS' attention to the topic of equitable access to tangible changes on the ground, although the work carried out with AUDA-NEPAD to put in place a policy and operational framework for regulatory capacity strengthening should offer entry points for addressing equity issues more systematically at country and regional levels.

Conclusion No 11: On cross-cutting Issues – While cross-cutting issues were not addressed systematically by TESS, aspects of gender, rights and the environment were tackled across various areas of work, and as requested by TESS' clients. Attention to gender was reflected in steps taken to disaggregate monitoring data and in ensuring gender parity in workshops and trainings. Rights issues informed the work of output 4 on access, while the recently drafted policy note on equity sets the stage for mainstreaming rights issues across future MAV+ interventions. Environmental perspectives received least attention but were picked up in connection with advisory work carried out on vaccine manufacturing. The approach to mainstreaming was also informed by the general guidance issued by the Commission, member states and African partners with respect to these cross-cutting issues.

4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation No 1 on Responsiveness

Develop an intervention logic to guide the new TESS that explains how the different areas of proposed intervention are inter-linked and how they respond to the different demands of its users.

- The design of support structures such as TESS needs to pay particular attention to developing a logic of intervention that explains how the different areas of intervention are inter-linked, add value to one another and respond to the demands of its users. This is especially important when the support structure is tasked to deliver quite different services to different clients.
- Where the complementarity between output areas cannot be demonstrated, or value-addition at a strategic level cannot be justified, consideration should be given to hiving off those elements that do not naturally fit and that can be delivered through other mechanisms.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Responsiveness – Develop an intervention logic to guide the new TESS that explains how the different areas of proposed intervention are inter-linked and how they respond to the different demands of its users. Where the complementarity between output areas cannot be demonstrated, consider hiving off those elements that do not naturally fit.	No 1	TESS 2.0 design team	4	Short term	Strategic

Recommendation No 2 on Ownership

Identify appropriate mechanisms for African stakeholder participation in the governance of envisaged future TESS collaboration with African partner institutions.

- The reason for excluding African partners from direct involvement in the TESS design process and subsequent oversight can be understood from the perspective of TESS' core mandate to support European MAV+ partners.
- However, given that a substantial part of TESS' resources focused on supporting African institutions suggests that the TESS design and governance could have benefitted from greater African participation. This would help build trust and relationships and in so doing reinforce the spirit of partnership that underpins MAV+ and the AU-EU health partnership.
- Such participation could take place in a dedicated structure that oversees the support provided to African institutions, for example by establishing a sub-committee of the OSC. Other possibilities include; i) the monthly hubs meetings, which could include every two months representatives of African partners, ii) the recently started biannual workshops which also have potential since they already bring African partners, the European Commission and the European ministries of foreign affairs/international cooperation together (at an intermediate political level).

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Ownership – Identify appropriate mechanisms for African stakeholder participation in the governance of envisaged future TESS collaboration with African partner institutions. To this end, consider setting up a sub-committee of the OSC or future TESS governance structure that could meet once or twice a year.	No 2	TESS 2.0 design team	4	Short term	Strategic

Recommendation No 3 On Coherence

Assign adequate executive authority to the TESS coordinator, while clarifying lines of accountability and responsibility of PMU management and oversight body (ies).

Consider the comparative advantage of maintaining separate projects under the TESS umbrella or of promoting pooling arrangements where activities can be financed from a common fund and executed by the most suited partner(s).

- Where a consortium of member state technical cooperation agencies are appointed to manage a support structure through an MPCA type arrangement, as in the case of TESS, close attention needs to be paid to the design of governance and management arrangements to ensure a smooth implementation, with unambiguous lines of accountability and provisions to tackle potentially competing institutional interests and priorities, as well as to facilitate cross-output collaboration.
- Particular attention needs to be given to the role and authority granted to the overall coordinator and the oversight role of the contracting authority, steering committee or equivalent oversight structure.

- Attention should also be given to specifying clear escalation mechanisms to resolve potential disputes or disagreements among partners, drafting explicit conflict-of-interest/ visibility rules, and making provisions for joint decision-making, common planning frameworks and harmonisation of procedures.
- Give careful consideration of the trade-offs between maintaining separate and discrete projects under the TESS umbrella, which risk creating silos, but which can facilitate efficient albeit potentially disconnected activities, and promoting pooling arrangements where activities are funded from a common fund and executed by the most suited implementing partner, which would reduce the silo effect, but which could increase the burden of oversight and administration.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Coherence – Assign adequate executive authority to the TESS coordinator, while clarifying lines of accountability and responsibility of PMU management and oversight body(ies). Consider the comparative advantage of maintaining separate projects under the TESS umbrella or of promoting pooling arrangements where activities can be financed from a common fund and executed by the most suited partner(s).	No 3	TESS 2.0 design team	4	Short term	Strategic

Recommendation No 4 On Flexibility

Apply design parameters that provide as much flexibility in the operations of a service facility as possible without compromising accountability.

Consider applying principles of adaptive management to balance flexibility and accountability and explore options of creating a contingency fund, making use of task teams and setting up fast-track procedures to adjust budget lines

- Design parameters should be explored to provide as much flexibility in the operations of a service facility as possible, without compromising accountability and in so doing limiting the constraints that may be imposed by contractual rules and procedures that can hinder efficiency and effectiveness.
- Principles of adaptive management provide a potentially relevant point of reference for realising the needed balance of flexibility and accountability, allowing for an easier re-alignment of human and financial resources across output areas to address emerging priority needs.
- Options might include: i) creating a contingency fund financed through contributions of all participating funders that could be used to accommodate unforeseen needs or urgencies; ii) making use of task-teams as a way to assign a cluster of staff/ experts and associated budgets to tackle a particular challenge/ assignment that cuts across the established division of labour; iii) including provisions within financial rules and approval procedures (e.g. fast track procedure within prescribed budget limits) that allows for an adjustment of budget lines to facilitate a re-orientation of priorities.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Flexibility – Apply design parameters that provide as much flexibility in the operations of a service facility as possible without compromising accountability. Consider applying principles of adaptive management to balance flexibility and accountability and explore options of creating a contingency fund, making use of task teams and setting up fast-track procedures to adjust budget lines.	No 4	TESS 2.0 design team	4	Short term	Strategic

Recommendation No 5 On Delivering Coordination Support

Opt for an emergent approach to tackle tasks such as promoting coordination where some uncertainty exists as to the desired level of coordination sought. Such an approach can allow MAV+ partners to test different options on a learning by doing basis.

Recognise the pivotal role of M&E and communications in facilitating coordination and ensure their adequate resourcing and support from management and governance structures.

- In complex settings, such as MAV+, where there are competing institutional interests at play and some uncertainty regarding the optimal and desired level of coordination and dialogue, careful consideration should be given to the benefits of an emergent approach over a prescriptive approach.
- An emergent approach can allow participants to consider different possible levels of coordination and joint communications/ dialogue on a learning by doing basis. At the same time, it can be helpful to clearly define minimum standards covering such issues as responsibilities for data collection and sharing, core mandatory indicators to report on, communications clearance procedures/ process (among others) set out possible costs and benefits of different levels of coordinated action and make clear what can be expected of all participants to make the system work.
- Both the M&E and communications functions should be recognised as central pillars of coordination and dialogue and afforded the necessary resources, and clarity of mandate to perform these functions adequately.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Supporting Coordination – Opt for an emergent approach to tackle tasks such as promoting coordination where some uncertainty exists as to the desired level of coordination sought. Such an approach can allow MAV+ partners to test different options on a learning by doing basis. Recognise the pivotal role of M&E and communications in facilitating	No 5 and No 7	TESS 2.0 design team; Contracted service providers	1	Short term	Operational

coordination and ensure their adequate resourcing and support from management and governance structures.					

Recommendation No 6 on Delivering Expertise

Develop a theory of change that explains the different roles TA is expected to perform, the conditions required for its support to be effective and sustainable and that identifies possible complementary measures to reinforce support provided.

This should be accompanied by guidance on good practices for TA delivery, including on ways to combine technical skills with soft/ process facilitation skills.

- Where TA serves as a core modality of support, as was the case with TESS, there is value in developing a comprehensive theory of change/ intervention logic that explains the different roles TA is expected to perform, the conditions required for their support to be effective and sustainable and identifies possible complementary measures to reinforce the support provided.
- This will help to clarify i) the expected pathway from expertise to institutional change, ii) ways to manage demand and assure the quality of experts, iii) conditions for exit/ sustainability, including counterpart arrangements or similar.
- This should apply to all output areas where TA is deployed and should be accompanied by guidance setting out good practices for TA delivery including attention to applying soft skills/ competencies in combination with hard skills.
- Such tools can enhance the management of TA, including development of common approaches, as well as allow for a discussion with potential clients on different options available, and what conditions need to be in place for efficient and effective delivery.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On the Management of TA – Develop a theory of change that explains the different roles TA is expected to perform, the conditions required for its support to be effective and sustainable and that identifies possible complementary measures to reinforce support provided. This should be accompanied by guidance on good practices for TA delivery, including on ways to combine technical skills with soft/ process facilitation skills.	No 6	TESS 2.0 design team; Contracted service providers	1	Short term	Operational

Recommendation No 7 on Capacity Development and Innovation

Conduct capacity assessments as the basis for designing interventions aimed at strengthening partner capacity. Such an assessment will enable consideration of the correct mix of tools to deploy

as well as providing a point of reference for discussions with partners on roles, responsibilities and pre-conditions for success.

- Careful consideration needs to be given to sustainability, which may well require a further round of support from MAV+ partners.
- This should include consideration of how individual TA can influence change and contribute to the strengthening of host partner capacities. This is necessary even when capacity development is a secondary rather than primary objective.
- In discussion with partners, adequate attention should be paid to combining the delivery of technical advice with consideration of other ways to promote capacity development including consideration of different modalities of support eg twinning, financial assistance or short term TA inputs as well as an explicit exit strategy.
- It should allow for specification of an explicit capacity transfer/ exit pathway, counterpart arrangements or similar and an agreed sustainability plan.
- The conduct of a capacity assessment exercise at the inception stage of an intervention can provide the point of reference for taking up these considerations and for developing a capacity development plan to guide the intervention.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Supporting Capacity Development -Conduct capacity assessments as the basis for designing interventions aimed at strengthening partner capacity. Such an assessment will enable consideration of the correct mix of tools to deploy as well as providing a point of reference for discussions with partners on roles, responsibilities and pre-conditions for success.	No 8	TESS 2.0 design team; Contracted service providers	1	Short term	Operational

Recommendation No 8 on Research and Analytical Support

Develop a knowledge management concept note that identifies the actions and measures required to ensure that policy advisory inputs and knowledge products serve their intended purposes whether to inform policy decisions, communicate results or promote dialogue.

Such a note should identify formats to ensure access to and effective communication of knowledge to users reflecting different levels of expertise and needs.

- The effectiveness of technical advisory support depends on inter-related factors falling into place that straddle demand-side and supply-side issues.
- Effectiveness can be enhanced when guided by a conceptual model that identifies the different stages of the advice/ knowledge-to-policy cycle. This includes identification of pre-conditions, critical steps and mitigation measures to overcome possible breaks in the cycle.
- In contexts of multiple demands emanating from different clients for different kinds of inputs, such a model can help providers manage demands and ensure maximum impact.

- It can moreover help to identify complementary knowledge management measures that may be needed to process and disseminate knowledge products in a way that meets the needs of individual clients as well as benefitting the wider MAV+ community.
- The concept note would clarify different knowledge/ information typologies, different client groups and their respective knowledge/ information needs and contexts, the various formats and opportunities for knowledge packaging and dissemination etc.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Providing Policy Advice and Knowledge – Develop a knowledge management concept note that identifies the actions and measures required to ensure that policy advisory inputs and knowledge products serve their intended purposes whether to inform policy decisions, communicate results or promote dialogue. Such a note should identify formats to ensure access to and effective communication of knowledge to users reflecting different levels of expertise and needs.	No 9	TESS 2.0 design team; Contracted service providers	1	Short term	Operational

Recommendation No 9 on Equitable Access

Make a recommendation on approving, adapting or rejecting the draft policy note on equitable access prepared by TESS.

In the event of its approval, consider and set out the responsibilities to be bestowed on TESS 2.0 to facilitate the implementation of the policy note among MAV+ partners.

- MAV+ partners are encouraged to decide to approve, amend or reject the draft policy paper on equitable access.
- Thereafter, partners should consider what technical advisory/ process facilitation role TESS can play in overseeing its implementation across all health hubs under the single health TEI including MAV+.
- The policy paper provides various entry points for doing so including ensuring compliance of new projects to the access eligibility criteria that have been elaborated in the draft policy paper and thereafter monitoring compliance during the course of implementation.
- TESS could also be asked to develop specific indicators on access dimensions for incorporation into the TEI indicator framework and reporting templates and could also prepare periodic lessons learned/ good practices notes for wider dissemination and uptake.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Promoting Equitable Access – Make a recommendation on approving, adapting or rejecting the	No 10	TESS 2.0 design team; MAV+	4	Short term	Strategic

draft policy note on equitable access prepared by TESS. In the event of its approval, consider and set out the responsibilities to be bestowed on TESS 2.0 to facilitate the implementation of the policy note among MAV+ partners.		management team			

Recommendation No 10 on Cross-Cutting Issues

Decide whether a more explicit treatment of cross-cutting issues is warranted in the next phase of TESS support.

In so doing, distinguish between the expectations of cross-cutting issues informing TESS' own programme of work versus ascribing a responsibility on TESS to support MAV+ partners to mainstream cross-cutting issues in all their operations.

- Based on experiences of TESS, MAV+ partners should reflect on whether a more explicit treatment of cross cutting issues is warranted in the next phase of support.
- In so doing, it will be important to distinguish between the expectations of cross-cutting issues informing TESS' own practices versus the role ascribed to TESS to ensure mainstreaming in MAV+ operations more widely (and potentially with respect to the other TEI health hubs) and as indeed is being proposed in relation to the topic of equitable access.
- Possible entry points for strengthening attention to cross-cutting issues include i) addressing such issues explicitly in results frameworks (outcome level) joint planning processes and related monitoring and reporting frameworks including the inclusion of specific indicators. Other possibilities include defining minimum cross-cutting issue screening requirements for requests/workplans received, as well as the integration of access/gender/environment markers in monitoring/ progress reports where deemed relevant.

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
On Mainstreaming Cross-cutting Issues -Decide whether a more explicit treatment of cross-cutting issues is warranted in the next phase of TESS support. In so doing, distinguish between the expectations of cross-cutting issues informing TESS' own programme of work versus ascribing a responsibility on TESS to support MAV+ partners to mainstream cross-cutting issues in their operations.	No 11	TESS 2.0 design team; MAV+ management team	4	Short term	Strategic

5 Annexes

Annex 1 – Terms of reference

See separate file

Annex 2 – Finalised inception report

See separate file

Annex 3 – Evaluation matrix

See separate file

Annex 4 – List of documents and sources of information consulted

See separate file

Annex 5 – List of people consulted

See separate file

Annex 6 – Final mission agenda (actual)

See separate file

Annex 7 – Summary presentation used for the debriefing/exchange on recommendations

See separate file

Annex 8 – Performance evaluation grid

See separate file