Enabel

Executive summary

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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Presentation of the evaluation

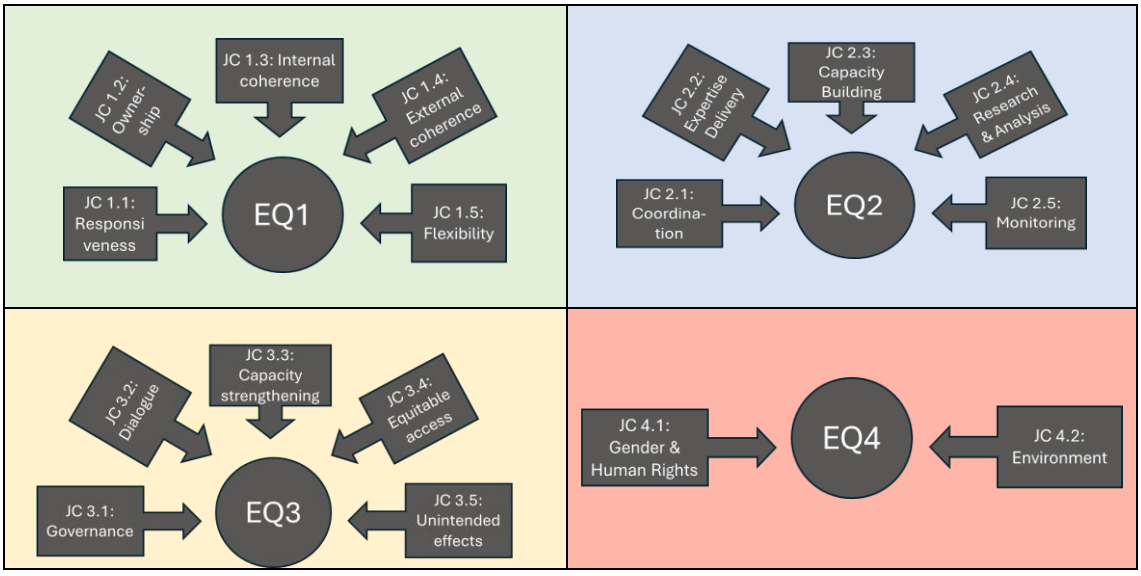
Purpose and Context – This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the Team Europe Support Structure (TESS) of the Team Europe Initiative for Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa (TEI MAV+). MAV+ was launched by the 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[1]. MAV+ contributes to this agenda by supporting the AU's efforts to strengthen access to affordable health products on the continent. TESS 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.

Objectives, Scope and Period covered – This evaluation serves accountability and learning purposes and provides a set of recommendations building on the intervention's strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation is also intended to provide insights on possible ways to improve partnership, governance and implementation mechanisms established for a new integrated health TEI.

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 outcome level. The learning objective focuses on identifying lessons learned from the successes and challenges of the approaches adopted by TESS. The evaluation covers the period of implementation from January 2023 to June 2026.

Intended Users – The primary users of this evaluation comprise the European Commission (EC), European Member States (EUMS), African institutional partners (Africa-CDC, AUDA-NEPAD) and implementing agencies, GIZ, Enabel and Expertise France.

Methodology – The evaluation adopted a qualitative approach, focused on gathering insights and experiences of key stakeholders involved in the design and delivery of TESS services, as well as of European and African stakeholders 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 evaluation was guided by an Evaluation matrix comprising 4 evaluation questions (EQs) and 17 judgement criteria (JCs).



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

Findings and Conclusions

EQ1: Concept and Design

The TESS 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 therefore there were no examples of good practice to draw upon, the design was inevitably imperfect 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.

On Responsiveness – TESS was an appropriate and necessary tool to help MAV+ partners to better coordinate a complex and multi-dimensional TEI. However, TESS' mandate went beyond the typical brief of a support facility by including a support role to MAV+'s African partners. While this helped to project the role of TESS as both internally and externally focused and helped reinforce the AU-EU health partnership, it placed considerable demands on TESS management to maintain internal programme coherence.

On Ownership – There was a generally high level of ownership across the MAV+ community including both European and African partners. European partners regarded TESS as a resource at their disposal to promote Team Europe and to service their individual and collective needs. 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 AU-EU partnership.

On Internal and External Coherence – Considerable management effort was required to assure internal coherence. TESS' dual mandate meant combining different internal capabilities, modus operandi and management requirements. The mobilisation of three technical cooperation agencies meant finding ways to manage at times competing institutional interests and understanding of mandate, while also harnessing the comparative advantage of each organisation. The Programme Operational Manual (POM), inception phase and efforts of individual staff helped build internal coherence. By contrast**,** there were few issues related to TESS' external coherence as its role had been clearly framed as servicing the needs of MAV+ partners. Its interactions with other structures were done largely on a collegial basis and mainly focused on knowledge and information sharing.

On Flexibility – TESS was able to adjust to changing circumstances and new demands, but 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 DG INTPA, the Operational Steering Committee (OSC) members, and African partners allowed TESS to make adjustments as required. This included extending the scope of its support to include the new integrated health TEI. However, the underlying Multi-Partner Cooperation Agreement (MPCA) placed certain limits to the scale of adjustments and adaptations that could be made. TESS staff proved capable to respond to unforeseen and at times short notice requests for assistance, a key capability for a demand-driven entity.

EQ2: Delivery and Outputs

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.

On Supporting Coordination – MAV+ European partners benefitted from coordination support provided by outputs 1 and 2. Use of tools developed depended on the readiness of MAV+ partners

to be coordinated. This was particularly so in the case of monitoring, reporting and communications. MAV+ European partners also benefitted from TESS to speak with one voice through advisory inputs from output 2 and communications support from output 1. The ability to formulate common positions and craft shared communications has been highly valued. The level of achievement realised depended ultimately on the willingness of European partners to collaborate and seek compromise.

On Managing Technical Assistance (TA) Delivery – Delivery of technical expertise was a core TESS responsibility featuring across all four output areas. The TA "toolbox" comprising short term, long term and embedded experts allowed for a differentiated approach to respond to a variety of needs and clients. While generally performing well, each modality encountered operational challenges that impacted on efficiency and effectiveness. A certain effort was made to link the different TA modalities to address common tasks, but administrative bottlenecks could make this difficult to achieve, although individual initiative did generate some positive examples of collaboration.

EQ3: Effects/ Contribution to Outcomes

TESS has recorded some important successes in promoting positive change in selected areas and in line with its mandated functions. With regard to support to European partners, the nature and extent of these achievements have 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. With respect to African partners, successes have depended substantially on the very good work of embedded TA and backstopping received from the TESS programme management unit, as well as the alignment of their work with host institution priorities. However, the comparatively weak institutional capacity of the host organisations has meant an overreliance on the embedded TA, which raises questions about the longer term sustainability.

On Improved Coordination and Dialogue – Through outputs 1 and 2, TESS has enhanced the coordination of the MAV+ portfolio and increased joint dialogue and shared communications. MAV+ partners have a better understanding of one another's work, a readiness to contribute to a common reporting mechanism, and have been able to make more informed decisions. This has prepared the ground for closer coordination going forward. But this depends on the readiness of MAV+ partners and opportunities under the integrated health TEI. TESS has also facilitated MAV+ European partners to speak with one voice. The communications function performed a particularly supportive role in projecting common messages and positions. African partners appreciate the growing coherence of the European voice, reflected in strategic interactions, notably via the High Level Strategic Meeting.

On Strengthened Capacity of Partners – Through outputs 3 and 4, TESS helped strengthen the pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution eco-system in Africa through support to Africa CDC and AUDA-NEPAD. This has been achieved through embedded TA who facilitated implementation of priority programmes of their host institutions. In a number of areas, African partners consider TESS' contribution as transformational, with benefits felt at national, regional and continental levels. Embedded TA were strategic gap-fillers, offering specialised expertise and making up for gaps in host capacity. This modality of support can make an impact when their expertise aligns with the partners' interest and priorities, and where sufficient backstopping support is also provided. However, insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that the work of embedded TA could be sustained.

On Policy Advise and Knowledge – TESS delivered a stream of research findings and analytical support to MAV+ partners. Requests for support included both short term advisory inputs as well as more elaborate and planned research assignments. Of note is a shifting pattern of demand with increasing requests from European Delegations. This required TESS to remain responsive, and demand driven, while also being strategic and focused. TESS' clients have expressed a high level of satisfaction with the pertinence and quality of analytical work and advice provided. Challenges encountered included the volume of requests, absorptive capacity of clients to make full use of advice provided, concerns that benefits did not always benefit the wider MAV+ community, lack of attention to synthesising or distilling the wealth of analytical/ research outputs generated.

On Contribution to Equitable Access – Equitable access as an area of policy concern for the MAV+ community gained attention over the life of TESS. This was 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. It is however too soon to attribute TESS's attention to the topic of equitable access to tangible changes on the ground, although 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.

EQ4: Cross-cutting Issues

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.

On addressing gender, rights and the environment – While cross-cutting issues were not addressed systematically, aspects of gender, rights and the environment were tackled across various areas of work. Attention to gender included disaggregation of monitoring data and 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.

Recommendations

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
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
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
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
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 coordination and	No 5 and No 7	TESS 2.0 design team; Contracted service providers	1	Short term	Operational

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
ensure their adequate resourcing and support from management and governance structures.					
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
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
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
On Promoting 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.	No 10	TESS 2.0 design team; MAV+ management team	4	Short term	Strategic
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