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# **Well done is better than well said: A critical analysis of the EU's mainstreaming efforts of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into its foreign policy operations**

Stok, Puck

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**Well done is better than well said:**

**A critical analysis of the EU's mainstreaming efforts of the Convention on the Rights of the  
Child (CRC) into its foreign policy operations**



**Universiteit  
Leiden**

**Puck Stok**

**S2727854**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the European Union's (EU) mainstreaming efforts of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its foreign operations. Despite its acceptance by all European member states and an extensive rhetoric on promoting and protecting children's rights, the EU has received critique on its practical commitments. While previous studies have highlighted the challenges towards mainstreaming children's rights in the EU's general foreign policy, this article focuses on the EU's mainstreaming efforts within specific operations, or more specifically the MENA region. The findings reveal that, while limited, the EU has mainstreamed children's rights into both policy processes and outcomes. However, this varies per operation. Moreover, it also reveals that the primary focus of the EU remains on protection and provision aspects rather than empowerment. Constructivism and norm cycle theory help explain the limited level of mainstreaming of the CRC in EU foreign policy and finding potential solutions towards effective mainstreaming of children's rights. The findings contribute to the discourse on advancing children's rights mainstreaming in EU foreign policy and guiding the EU's rhetoric into action.

**Keywords:** Children's rights; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); European Union (EU); CFSP; Mainstreaming; MENA Region; Constructivism; Norm cycle theory

### **List of abbreviations**

**CaAC:** Children and Armed Conflict

**CFSP:** Common Foreign and Security Policy

**CRC:** Convention on the Rights of the Child

**CSDP:** Common Security and Defence Policy

**CRAG:** Children's Rights Action Group

**EU:** European Union

**EUAM:** European Union Advisory Civilian Mission

**EUBAM:** European Union Border Assistance Mission

**EUNAVFOR MED IRINI:** European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Irini

**EUPOL:** European Union Police Mission

**FAC:** Foreign Affairs Council

**ILO:** International Labour Organisation

**HR:** The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

**MENA:** Middle East and North Africa

**UN:** United Nations

**UNICEF:** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

**UNMIL:** United Nations Support Mission in Libya

**UNHCR:** United Nations Commission on Human Rights

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## **Introduction**

*"Mankind owes the child the best it has to give."*

Geneva Declaration, 1927

In November 2024, the world marks the 35th anniversary of adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations [UN], 1989). The CRC was the first legally binding instrument that provided a holistic approach towards children's rights, including the child's economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights (Doek, 2019, p. 13). However, accession to the CRC is limited to states only, preventing international organisations such as the European Union (EU) from joining the Convention (Jones, 2005; Iusmen, 2013). However, while the EU cannot ratify the Convention, it has increasingly become an important reference document within its policy documents (Stalford & Drywood, 2011; Iusmen, 2013).

With the ratification of the CRC, the international community, including all EU member states, have pledged to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of all children. The promotion and respect for human rights, including the rights of children, has been one of the core values of the Union (European Union [EU], 2007). For example, in a 2011 joint communication with the commission, the then High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), Catherine Ashton, even called promoting children's rights a foreign policy priority of the EU. However, while it is an ideal commitment, the enjoyment of rights is far from the lived reality of millions of children worldwide (Save the Children International, 2023).

Although states have signed the CRC, their written commitments do not always align with their actions (Thompson, 2014). For example, several organisations and the European Parliament (2014) have expressed their concerns about the extent to which children's rights are included in the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) operations, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Save the Children, 2010; CRAG, 2012; von Bahr, 2017). This raises a fundamental question: *To what extent has the EU mainstreamed the CRC into its CFSP operations?*

While scholars have examined the challenges of integrating human rights into the EU's foreign policy, there has been limited focus on children's rights mainstreaming in the EU's foreign operations under the CFSP (Grugel & Iusmen, 2012; von Bahr, 2017). This thesis addresses this gap

using a constructivist approach and norm cycle theory. The thesis starts by exploring the debate around the challenges of mainstreaming children's rights within the EU framework and specifies essential concepts. The thesis then analyses the historical development and trends of incorporating children's rights into EU foreign policy. Subsequently, a small N case study examines the EU's practical implementation of its commitments in its foreign operations as a human rights advocate. This analysis is crucial as it holds the EU accountable for its practical commitments to promoting and protecting children's rights and highlights potential shortcomings and challenges. By identifying these issues, the thesis aims to contribute to the discourse on examining the EU's approach to mainstreaming children's rights in its CFSP operations and consequently contribute to advancing children's rights globally.

### **Literature review**

While scholars have focused on mainstreaming human rights into EU foreign policy, only some provide insights into mainstreaming children's rights (Grugel & Iusmen, 2012). Scholars generally hold two perspectives on the EU's incorporation of human and children's rights in its foreign policy. Some scholars argue that the EU has taken significant steps to integrate human and children's rights (Horng, 2003; Sedelmeier, 2006; Iusmen, 2013). However, an oft-cited critique is that the EU confines to written commitments (Youngs, 2004; Iusmen, 2018; Carrasco, 2020). Scholars attribute this inconsistency to various challenges and shortcomings within the EU (Vandenhoe, 2011; von Bahr, 2017). For example, von Bahr (2017, p. 513) emphasises that while the EU's normative commitments are clear, translating these into actions remains a significant challenge. Consequently, this review addresses two significant challenges to including the CRC in EU foreign policy operations: ideals versus interests and the Brussels gap.

#### *Ideals versus interests*

The EU is built on the norm of protecting and promoting human rights (EU, 2007). These norms are incorporated into EU foreign policy through declarations, treaties, and strategies (Manners, 2002, p. 242). Consequently, the EU is increasingly argued to be a normative power because of its ability to influence beliefs and norms beyond its borders, partly through its physical presence (Manners, 2002; Sjursen, 2006). However, arguing that the EU is a normative power does not necessarily mean that the EU consistently acts by these norms (Manners, 2008, p. 45).

Scholars argue that the EU has often prioritised geostrategic concerns over human rights norms (Youngs, 2004; Hyde-Price, 2006; Smith, 2011). For example, Youngs (2004) demonstrates that the EU withdrew its support for a United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) resolution criticising China's human rights record due to EU economic interests. This tension between the normative ideals of the EU and the practical interests of the EU and its member states has also affected the prioritisation of children's rights within the EU's foreign policy agenda (Iusmen & Stalford, 2015; Von Bahr, 2017). Although the EU has developed a common foreign policy, it is not a single foreign policy (Pace, 2007, p. 1047). While the EU bureaucracy plays a role in the CFSP, member states in the European Council ultimately decide on its policies and activities.

However, the EU's foreign policy is not solely driven by state interests (Rosencrance, 1998; Whitman, 1998; Manners, 2002). For instance, Manners (2002) has argued that values and norms coexist with other interests, as seen in political dialogues and the inclusion of the clause on the abolition of the death penalty in EU bilateral agreements (Manners, 2002, p. 248).

### *The Brussels gap*

The term "the Brussels gap" refers to the implementation gap between policy and guideline formulation in Brussels and its application by EU delegations (Bennett, 2015; Wouters & Hermez, 2016). Wouters and Hermez (2016) have identified several factors contributing to this gap.

Firstly, there is a lack of knowledge of the guidelines and policies on children's rights (Bennett, 2015). Knowledge varies per mission and diplomats' backgrounds, resulting in inconsistent application (Churrua Muguruza et al., 2014). Moreover, as junior staff in diplomatic missions are often assigned to implement such guidelines, there is limited distribution of the guidelines among other staff (Wouters & Hermez, 2016, p. 17). Additionally, there is a lack of effective accountability mechanisms to monitor the EU regarding its children's rights obligations (Nyllund & Hyllested, 2010; Thompson, 2014). Consequently, human rights promotion in the CFSP and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) remains primarily confined to the guidelines (Sanchez Barrueco, 2012; Thompson, 2014; Carrasco, 2020).

Moreover, while guidelines provide legal guidance to EU delegations and operations, they are not legally binding (Wouters & Hermez, 2016, p. 14). Therefore, delegations have the option to focus on children's rights. However, as a result, they are often sidelined (von Bahr, 2017, p. 508). Instead,

diplomats focus on other interests, such as trade agreements (Bennett, 2015). However, despite not being legally binding, the guidelines do constitute a political representation of EU priorities as they are adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) as part of the CFSP (Wouters & Hermez, 2016, p. 14). Therefore, guidelines should form the basis for EU action.

The existing literature highlights significant challenges in mainstreaming children's rights within EU foreign policy. While there is a clear normative commitment, practical implementation often falls short due to competing interests and structural complexities. However, limited attention remains given to the current state of mainstreaming children's rights in EU foreign operations and the EU's actions taken to protect and promote children's rights globally.

### **Theoretical framework**

Constructivism is particularly suited for this research as it offers a dynamic framework for examining the EU's normative commitments, particularly concerning mainstreaming the CRC in its foreign policy. Unlike realism and rationalism, which focus solely on state interests, constructivism looks at the construction of societal norms and their impact on state behaviour (Reus-Smit, 2004, p. 22). Constructivist scholars such as Finnemore (1996) and Wendt (1999) argue that while states may pursue self-interest, their interests are shaped by evolving norms and identities.

As understood in this research, norms are a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 891). However, norms do not emerge from thin air. Instead, they go through a "lifecycle" before they get accepted (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Norms are not static but emerge and evolve through interactions of ideas and beliefs between states and communities (Wendt, 1999; Hawkins, 2004; Greenhill, 2010). Consequently, as illustrated in Figure 1, norm cycle theory posits that norms evolve through a social process of three stages: emergence, cascade, and internalisation (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; García Iommi, 2020). Moreover, the theory emphasises the role of actors in shaping and distributing them (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

The emergence of norms generally occurs through norm entrepreneurs. Norm entrepreneurs propose a specific societal norm and persuade states to adopt it (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 895). When enough actors endorse a new norm, a "tipping point" is reached, starting the second stage: norm cascade. States identify themselves as part of a particular group. As more states adopt the norm,

they pressure other states or actors, specifically within this group, to follow suit. Therefore, through this socialisation process, when states within a group endorse the new norm, this redefines the identity and behaviour of the whole group (Fearon, 1997). However, norms are only internalised and given meaning when applied (Wiener, 2017, p. 9). In order to assess the validity of a norm, three elements are necessary: formal validity, social recognition and cultural validation (Wiener, 2017, p. 5).

This conformity with the new identity is known as the internalisation stage. Norms are actively socialised and seen as a new 'normal' and are no longer a matter of debate (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Formal validity focuses on the legal framework of specific norms through institutionalisation in treaties and declarations (García Iommi, 2020, p. 80). Social recognition focuses on invoking norms by, for example, businesses and lawyers, creating a social framework that essentially uses the habit mechanism (García Iommi, 2020, p. 80). Cultural validation requires establishing the contextualised meaning of a norm across different regions and cultures, for example, by court rulings (García Iommi, 2020, pp. 80-81). Only when a norm has all three elements can it acquire the "taken-for-granted status" in society.

*Table 1: Stages of norms (García Iommi, 2020)*

|                            | <i>Stage 1: norm emergence</i>            | <i>Stage 2: norm cascade</i>                  | <i>Stage 3: dynamic norm internalisation</i> |                                 |                                                                             |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            |                                           |                                               | <i>Formal validity</i>                       | <i>Social recognition</i>       | <i>Cultural validation</i>                                                  |
| <i>Actors</i>              | Norm entrepreneurs                        | States, International Organisations, networks | Negotiators                                  | Lawyers and other professionals | Norm implementers (bureaucrats), legal interpreters (courts)                |
| <i>Motives</i>             | Altruism, empathy, ideational, commitment | Legitimacy, reputation, esteem                | Authority of law                             | Conformity                      | Implementation                                                              |
| <i>Dominant mechanisms</i> | Persuasion                                | Socialisation, institutionalisation           | Institutionalisation                         | Habit                           | Constructing meaning-in-use, international-regional dialogue and compromise |

### **Conceptual framework**

#### *Children's rights*

Children's rights refer to the rights and needs of individuals under 18, as defined by Article 1 of the CRC (1989). These rights vary according to a child's age and developmental stage. Children's rights are relatively new in the broader human rights framework. Initially, society focused on adults' civil

and political rights, known as first-generation rights (Vasak, 1977). Later, social and economic rights emerged as second-generation rights (Vasak, 1977). However, third-generation rights reflect societal efforts to support the positive and negative rights of society's most vulnerable groups, including children (Cornescu, 2009, pp. 5-6). While positive rights refer to the state's or organisation's duty to provide the child with certain rights or goods, negative rights refer to the obligation not to interfere with certain rights.

However, within the conceptualisation of children's rights, there is a general debate on these rights between scholars. On the one hand, scholars have argued for a focus on the special protection of children's rights, viewing them as vulnerable individuals. However, children cannot be considered as only victims (Lee-Koo, 2018, pp. 61-65). Children's capacity to act on their behalf and engage in decisions that impact them grows as they mature in their social and cultural contexts (Krutzinna, 2022, pp. 122-124). Consequently, scholars argue that children should be seen as bearers of human rights, acknowledging their agency, resilience, and coping mechanisms (Detrick, 1992; Hinton, 2008; Vandenhole, 2011).

The CRC balances these views by focusing on three types of rights: protection, provision and participation rights. While recognising the importance of children's agency as they mature in their social and cultural contexts, it also recognises the child as a vulnerable individual needing provisions and protection from the state (Vandenhole, 2011, p. 486). Consequently, children in this research are viewed as individuals needing protection and provision and agents in their own rights.

To comprehensively analyse children's rights, this research utilises Freeman's (1983) 3Ps framework, which reflects the CRC's balance of protection, provision and participation rights (Doek, 2019, pp. 7-8). While protection involves safeguarding children from harm and exploitation, provision involves ensuring access to essential resources and opportunities for the child's growth and development (Doek, 2019, pp. 7-8). However, participation rights acknowledge children as individual rights-holders, emphasising their ability to express their views and opinions and actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

### *Mainstreaming*

As mainstreaming is a relatively new concept, it is often conceptualised in specific policy contexts. However, this also means the concept constantly evolves (Scholten et al., 2017, p. 285). While mainstreaming has primarily been developed in the context of gender, its application extends to

other areas, including children's rights (Scholten et al., 2017, p. 285). Therefore, the conceptualisation of mainstreaming is drawn from gender-based literature and is then connected to children's rights.

Consequently, this research defines mainstreaming as integrating normative principles and provisions of international instruments, such as the CRC, across all EU policies (Bell, 2004, p. 252). Its objective is to ensure that considerations of children's rights are systematically incorporated into decision-making processes and policy implementation. Incorporating children's rights has three levels: policy process, policy output, and policy outcome (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2009; Gutner & Thompson, 2010). However, for the scope of this research, the focus lies on the first two levels, as they analyse the implementation of specific policies rather than the implications (Von Bahr, 2017, p. 501).

At the policy process level, mainstreaming involves incorporating policies, tasks and procedures within EU CFSP operations that prioritise and advance children's rights set out in the CRC (Gutner & Thompson, 2010). This includes integrating thematic children's rights and general principles set out in the CRC into the policymaking framework of the EU (Von Bahr, 2017, p. 502). Following this, policy outputs include various forms of compliance with its policies at various levels of the EU. Moreover, outputs include actions and behaviours employed by the EU that align with the goals and guidelines initially outlined in policy processes (Young, 1999). In this context, mainstreaming aims to achieve results and outcomes promoting children's rights through policy processes.

## **Methodology**

### *Methodology*

First, a historical analysis examines how the EU has incorporated children's rights into its foreign policies. The primary focus of this analysis is on EU legal instruments, foreign policy strategies, and policy documents regarding children's rights, as outlined in Table 2. A small-N case study with a two-step qualitative content analysis is then conducted due to the understanding that mainstreaming, as illustrated in the conceptualisation, has two levels: policy processes and policy outcomes.

A qualitative content analysis of operation-specific policy documents and strategies is conducted to assess the extent of mainstreaming the CRC in policy processes. This is followed by an analysis of

EU communications, press releases and projects to assess the extent of mainstreaming the CRC in policy outcomes. By examining the mandates, strategies, and actions undertaken within these operations, this thesis seeks to evaluate the translation of the mainstreaming of the CRC in policy processes into policy outcomes.

A comparative small-N case-study approach provides an in-depth understanding of the EU's mainstreaming efforts across different contexts (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 238). As the approach allows for a more detailed examination of whether an EU has mainstreamed the CRC into specific operations, the internal validity is more effective than a more extensive, generalised study approach (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 238). However, when employing a small-N case study, the external validity, or generalisation of the study, is generally weaker (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 238). This research will address this shortcoming during the case selection in the next section.

Moreover, by combining a small-N comparative case study with a qualitative content analysis of official documents and communications, this research evaluates the incorporation of CRC principles into CSDP operations. A qualitative content analysis goes beyond counting words and extracting patterns, usually done in quantitative content analysis (Halperin & Heath, 2017, pp. 247-248). While this is often used in cases of mass communication, the method is often criticised for missing information implied in the text (Weber, 1990, p. 21). Instead, qualitative content analysis focuses on the underlying messages in the studied texts (Weber, 1990, p. 58). Therefore, a case study approach combined with qualitative content analysis is best suited to analyse the extent to which the EU has articulated children's rights considerations as outlined in the CRC. Moreover, it examines how the CRC is prioritised and operationalised within different EU CFSP operations.

### *Case selection*

Prolonged conflicts and humanitarian crises have impacted Afghanistan and the MENA region, where children are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations (Save the Children International, 2023). The EU has made explicit commitments towards protecting and promoting children's rights, especially regarding children and armed conflict (CaAC) in its relations with third states (EU, 2007; European Commission, 2006; von Bahr, 2017, p. 507; European External Action Service [EEAS], 2023). However, the critique of the EU's mainstreaming record of children's rights in the MENA region implies that the EU has not acted in accordance with its commitments (European Parliament, 2014).

The selected cases, including Iraq, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon and Afghanistan, represent a variety of conflict and post-conflict environments, from active war zones to countries dealing with refugee influxes due to armed conflict (World Bank, 2020). Consequently, children in these cases are faced with a number of challenges and violations, including the recruitment of children as soldiers, displacement, and lack of access to education and healthcare (Save the Children International, 2023). By examining these specific MENA countries, this research gives a comprehensive overview of the extent to which the EU has prioritised mainstreaming children's rights in various conflict-affected contexts.

Moreover, to strengthen the external validity of the following analysis, the selected cases span from 2002 to 2023, which allows for the potential identification of long-term trends and recent developments in the EU's external actions (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 245). This broad range is crucial for evaluating the consistency and evolution of CRC and EU guideline integration in CFSP operations.

### *Operationalisation*

The operationalisation of mainstreaming policy processes and policy outcomes is structured around two key components: direct references to the CRC and indirect references through general principles or thematic children's rights.

While direct references include identifying explicit commitments towards the CRC in CFSP-related documents, indirect references refer to implicit reflections of the CRC based on Von Bahr's (2017, p. 502) measurement of policy content. This measurement refers to the documents or actions either referencing the CRC's general principles or the 3P framework. The CRC guiding principles include the right to non-discrimination, the right to the consideration of the child's best interest, the right to life, survival and development and the right to participation, which includes the right to be heard and respected in matters concerning the child.

Policy processes and policy outcomes are considered to have a high level of mainstreaming if there is either a direct or an indirect reference to the CRC (von Bahr, 2017, p. 502). However, for this to qualify as a high level of mainstreaming, all three themes of the 3P framework must be reflected in either the policy, projects or communications. If only one or two themes of the 3P framework are reflected, it is considered a medium level of mainstreaming. It is considered a low level of

mainstreaming if there are commitments to children's rights without specific linkage to the CRC or its principles. All outcomes are categorised based on the 3P framework to analyse potential patterns of CRC incorporation.

Moreover, mainstreaming is assessed concerning policy outcomes reflecting the commitments in the policy process, as illustrated in Table 3 (von Bahr, 2017, p. 502). If both the policy process and outcomes reflect the CRC to a high level, this is considered a high level of overall mainstreaming. If the policy process reflects the CRC to a high level but the outcomes do so to a medium or low level, it is categorised as a low level of overall mainstreaming. Similarly, if the policy outcome reflects the CRC to a high level but the process does not, it is also considered to have a low level of overall mainstreaming. However, in cases where the policy process reflects the CRC to a medium level and the outcomes reflect it to a high level, it is regarded as a high level of overall mainstreaming as the outcome reflects both the policy process and children's rights as a whole.

*Table 2: Foundational Legal Instruments EU*

|                                              | <i>Title</i>                                                                   | <i>Year</i> |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Legal documents</i>                       | Maastricht Treaty                                                              | 1993        |
|                                              | Amsterdam Treaty                                                               | 1999        |
|                                              | Nice Treaty                                                                    | 2003        |
|                                              | Lisbon Treaty                                                                  | 2009        |
|                                              | EU Charter of Fundamental Rights                                               | 2000        |
| <i>EU foreign strategies</i>                 | EU Security Strategy                                                           | 2003        |
|                                              | Handbook on CSDP missions and operations                                       | 2015        |
|                                              | Global strategy EU CFSP                                                        | 2016        |
|                                              | <i>Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1</i>                              | 2017        |
|                                              | <i>Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 2</i>                              | 2018        |
|                                              | <i>Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 3</i>                              | 2019        |
|                                              | EU Strategic Compass                                                           | 2022        |
|                                              | <i>Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass</i>          | 2024        |
| <i>EU children's rights policy documents</i> | EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child      | 2007        |
|                                              | Guidelines on the child and armed conflict (2008)                              | 2008        |
|                                              | Council Conclusions on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child | 2008        |

|  |                                              |      |
|--|----------------------------------------------|------|
|  | EU agenda for the rights of the child        | 2011 |
|  | Child Rights Toolkit                         | 2014 |
|  | EU strategy on the rights of the child       | 2021 |
|  | EU action plan on human rights and democracy |      |
|  | 2015-2019                                    | 2015 |
|  | 2020-2024                                    | 2020 |
|  | EU strategy on the rights of the child       | 2021 |

*Table 3: Overall levels of CRC mainstreaming*

|                                | <i>Policy process - low</i>   | <i>Policy process - medium</i> | <i>Policy process - high</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Policy outcome - low</i>    | Low level of mainstreaming    | Low level of mainstreaming     | Low level of mainstreaming   |
| <i>Policy outcome - medium</i> | Low level of mainstreaming    | Medium level of mainstreaming  | Low level of mainstreaming   |
| <i>Policy outcome - high</i>   | Medium level of mainstreaming | High level of mainstreaming    | High level of mainstreaming  |

## **Historical analysis**

### *Emergence of children's rights in EU legal instruments*

Historically, the EU's focus on human rights, including children's rights, was limited, as it infringed upon the domain of domestic legal and policy actors (Stalford & Drywood, 2009, p. 143). For example, there was no direct nor indirect reference to the CRC in the Maastricht Treaty (EU, 1992), formally establishing the European Union. However, this changed in 1997 with the establishment of the Treaty of Amsterdam. While it did not contain direct references to the CRC, it was the first Treaty to incorporate the child's rights into a legally binding document (Pearson, 2013, p. 11). For example, age was included in Article 13 of the Treaty on the European Community as a characteristic of non-discrimination (Pearson, 2013, p. 12).

While the Nice Treaty of 2001 did not introduce any advancements towards the child's rights framework, the Lisbon Treaty provided a significant turning point by including several provisions that underscored the CRC's objective of promoting and protecting the child's rights. Article 3(3) obligated the EU to actively promote and protect children's rights internally and externally. Moreover, Article 3(5) emphasised the EU's obligation to international law, including the CRC.

However, it is essential to note that this document's focus on children's rights primarily emphasised protecting and providing for children rather than acknowledging children's agency.

The Treaty also marked a turning point by making the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) legally binding. The charter outlines the child's indivisible right to education in Article 14(3), prohibits child labour and provides provisions for protecting working youth in Article 32. Moreover, article 24 of the charter explicitly addresses children's rights, incorporating the CRC's general principles, including the child's right to be included in matters that concern them, for the first time acknowledging children's agency in an EU legal instrument.

#### *Emergence of children's rights in EU foreign strategies*

Several EU foreign policy strategies emerged from 2003 to 2024. While direct references to the CRC were absent, the strategies reflected evolving priorities and approaches towards promoting children's rights. While both the EU security strategy (2003) and the subsequent global strategy of EU CFSP (2016) did not specifically address children's rights, the three implementation reports of the global strategy included references to actions taken regarding the improvement and provision of children's education and reintegration of child soldiers. All three reports have demonstrated EU reintegration efforts of child soldiers in Colombia and educational projects of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon (EEAS, 2017, pp. 14-18; 2018, pp. 8-10; 2019a, pp. 43-45). While remaining limited, this indicates that the EU has been addressing children's rights in its foreign affairs. However, references have focused more on provisional measures than children's empowerment. Moreover, while the EU Strategic Compass of 2022 affirmed the EU's role in protecting and assisting conflict-affected children as well as a commitment to the CaAC agenda, the 2024 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass did not state any action the EU took supporting this commitment (EEAS, 2022a; 2024a).

#### *Development of children's rights in EU policy documents*

In 2006, the EU Commission issued a specific communication regarding an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (European Commission, 2006). Following this communication, the Council adopted several policy documents to outline the EU's priorities for protecting and promoting children's rights in its external relations.

The first milestones were the guidelines on children and armed conflict and the guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (EEAS, 2007a; 2007b). Though not legally binding, the guidelines underlined a strong commitment towards the CRC and its general principles in the EU's external action. Moreover, it recognises that children have inherent and inalienable rights and provides tools that states and delegations could use to promote and protect children's rights, including political dialogues, statements, funding, policy officials' training, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation. For example, the guidelines on children and armed conflict stated that in cases where agreements with third states were up for renewal, the EU would consider the state's children's rights record (EEAS, 2007a, p. 6). The guidelines were further developed in 2006 with the checklist for integrating CaAC into CSDP operations. However, the language of the checklist and guidelines over-emphasises protection and provisional measures (von Bahr, 2017, p. 508). Moreover, while the 2006 commission communication stressed the importance of children's evolving capacities, there has been little to no mention of this in the documents.

Soon after adopting the guidelines, the Council issued conclusions on promoting and protecting children's rights in the EU's external action and provided further guidance (Council of the European Union, 2008). The conclusions emphasised the EU and its member states' commitment towards integrating the promotion and protection of the child's rights in EU external action. Furthermore, the conclusions directly referenced the CRC and its general principles (Council of the European Union, 2008, pp. 4-5). They stated several actions that had to be taken to mainstream children's rights into its external actions, including the provision of healthcare and education as well as protecting the child from harm. While the conclusions mainly focussed on the provisional and protection rights, they also underlined the need to promote children's participation in decision-making processes, ultimately recognising more of children's agency (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 6).

The development of the EU agenda for the rights of the child in 2011 reaffirmed that children's rights remained a priority in EU foreign policy. However, despite previous commitment towards children's participation, the agenda primarily focused on child protection rather than the child's empowerment. The EU and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Child Rights Toolkit (2014) aimed to address this issue by offering practical guidance for promoting child participation. Moreover, the EU action plans on human rights and democracy, a key document in EU foreign policy, have also seen a shift in empowering children's rights in third states. While the action plan of 2015-2019 primarily focused on protecting children, the action plan of 2020-2024

addressed empowering children by advocating for child-friendly justice systems and encouraging children to participate in decision-making programs (EEAS, 2020a, p. 14).

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021) represents the latest specific EU commitment to protecting and promoting children's rights. Building upon a previously established framework, it sets out concrete actions for mainstreaming children's rights across all EU activities. Much like the Council conclusions of 2008, the strategy highlights measures for protecting children, providing for them, and advocating for their participation.

Overall, there have been considerable advancements in the framework towards mainstreaming the principles set out in the CRC in both the EU's legal policies and the development of child rights instruments. However, although some documents mention participation, the main focus remains on the protection and provisional rights of the child. However, whether the written commitment towards mainstreaming children's rights translates into concrete action remains to be seen in the following section.

## **Results**

### *Iraq*

In the case of Iraq, there is a notable absence of direct and indirect references to the CRC across various operational mandates and EU documents. For example, while the 2017 Council conclusions on Iraq referred to the need to implement programs that protect and provide education to children whom armed groups have recruited, the latest conclusions of 2019 do not refer to this end (Council of the European Union, 2017a; 2019). Moreover, the 2018 EU-Iraq partnership and cooperation agreement does not mention any commitment to protecting or promoting children's rights (Council of the European Union, 2018). Lastly, while there are some general humanitarian assistance commitments, the council decisions establishing and amending the EU Advisory Civilian Mission (EUAM) mandates do not refer to the rights of the child nor the CRC (Council of the European Union, 2017b; 2024).

Regarding policy outcomes, although there are no direct references to the CRC's objectives, there have been projects established and funded by the EU delegation in Iraq. For example, in 2016, the EU established the EU schools program in cooperation with the British Council to improve education quality and increase girls' participation in educational programs (EEAS, 2016). Moreover,

in 2019, a new project was launched to strengthen the institutional capacities of education (EEAS, 2019). These educational projects indicate that CRC provisions are mainstreamed in policy outcomes regarding education rights. However, as there are only educational project records, mainstreaming the CRC remains medium.

Overall, as the EU's CFSP operation lacks mainstreaming of children's rights within policy processes and has a medium level of mainstreaming in policy outcomes, the EU's overall mainstreaming of the CRC in Iraq can be considered to be low.

### *Afghanistan*

The EEAS has made significant commitments towards children's rights in its relations with Afghanistan. For example, the EEAS states that promoting, protecting, and respecting children is a core priority in its relations. It illustrates various provisions it has provided for Afghan children who need food and education (EEAS, 2022b). Moreover, the Council's conclusions on the political relations between the EU and Afghanistan emphasise the importance of giving special protection to the rights of children, particularly in the case of violence against children. However, more notably, the conclusion stresses the importance of the role of young people in peace and security processes (Council of the European Union, 2023, p. 3). This indicates that mainstreaming in the policy process is at a high level.

Moreover, although EU missions like the EU Police Mission (EUPOL) lacked references to children's rights both in its legal instruments as well as in its actions, recent speeches by the High Representative highlight concern over grave violations faced by Afghan children and their rights to life, survival, and development (EEAS, 2013; 2022c; Council of the European Union, 2022). Additionally, specific actions such as financing educational projects and supporting UNICEF initiatives on protecting children from violence reflect a commitment to improving the well-being and access to education for Afghan children (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2023a; 2023b). However, as there are only records on educational and protection projects, the mainstreaming level of the CRC remains medium.

Overall, the EU's policy process has shown a high level of mainstreaming of the CRC. However, this written commitment has not translated into a practical commitment as it does not mainstream

all three rights stated in the policy process. Therefore, the overall mainstreaming of the CRC is considered low in Afghanistan.

### *Jordan*

While the association agreement has not indicated a commitment towards the child's rights, the EU-Jordan partnership priorities highlight a developing commitment to the CRC's general principle of the child's right to life, survival, and development (Council of the European Union, 2002). For example, in regards to policy processes, while the 2016 partnership priorities primarily focused on the access to education of both Jordanian children and refugees, the 2021 priorities added to this by affirming a commitment towards regular dialogues on human rights and, more specifically, children's rights (Council of the European Union, 2016; 2021). However, the priorities do not specify what specific rights will be addressed in these dialogues and programs. Moreover, references are made in the 2021 document to empower youth in political processes and employment (Council of the European Union, 2021, pp. 8-11). However, as there are no references to protecting children, the mainstreaming level in the policy process is considered medium.

Regarding policy outcomes, actions such as educational programs for "vulnerable groups" and funding for UNICEF initiatives indicate progress towards mainstreaming CRC principles into policy outcomes (EEAS, 2022d; UNICEF, 2020). For example, as of 2020, the EU funded and assisted in a project initiated by UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to empower Jordanian and Syrian youth with job opportunities (UNICEF, 2020). However, despite the written commitment, projects on political participation remain absent.

Despite this, the EU shows a medium level of mainstreaming of the CRC in both policy processes and outcomes in Jordan.

### *Libya*

In contrast to Jordan, the analysis of the mainstreaming of the CRC in Libya reveals a limited consideration of operational mandates and actions. For example, both the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) and the EU Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Iriini (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI), established seven years later, do not refer to either the CRC or children's rights (Council of the European Union, 2013; Council of the European Union, 2020). However, the EUNAVFOR

mission did provide a reference towards human smuggling and trafficking, which arguably includes child protection.

Despite the lack of mainstreaming children's rights in policy processes, the EU has demonstrated a high level of mainstreaming children's rights in policy outcomes. For example, the EU has funded several projects that have assisted in improving juvenile justice, supported educational projects, and promoted youth inclusion in decision-making processes (UN Support Mission in Libya [UNMIL], 2016; EEAS, 2019c; 2022e). These projects address all the CRC's thematic rights and indicate references to its general principles.

Overall, the EU does not show any indication of mainstreaming the CRC in its policy processes but does show a high level of mainstreaming in policy outcomes. Therefore, the operation has a medium level of mainstreaming.

### *Lebanon*

The EU's partnership with Lebanon illustrates considerable references towards the CRC in both processes and outcomes. However, there are some challenges. While the association agreement does not reference the CRC, the 2016 partnership priorities emphasise child protection and education improvement (EEAS, 2006; 2016, pp. 13-16). For example, within the priorities, the EU makes commitments towards improving education and child protection mechanisms, stating that the EU is committed to "safeguarding children" (European Commission, 2016, p. 15).

Moreover, the EU has funded various child-friendly justice projects (UNICEF, 2022; 2024). However, children's rights seem to worsen in Lebanon, underscoring the challenges to effectively mainstreaming the CRC (EEAS, 2024). For example, according to UNICEF, Lebanese children continue to be exposed to high levels of domestic violence and child marriage (UNICEF, 2023c).

That said, the EU has still committed to promoting children's rights through communications regarding the protection of children. Moreover, it has committed itself to projects such as the Youth Resolve project, which aims to improve children's participation in civil society, and the Back to the Future project, which aims to improve educational access for Syrian refugees and Lebanese children (EEAS, 2020b; 2021).

Despite challenges, the EU shows a high level of mainstreaming in its policy outcomes. Moreover, while the policy processes focus primarily on provision and protection, the policy outcomes indicate child empowerment mechanisms. Consequently, the operation in Lebanon has a medium level of mainstreaming.

## **Discussion**

### *Findings and interpretation*

Several trends emerge from the cases analysed. Notably, there is a lack, except in Afghanistan, of fully mainstreaming the CRC within policy processes. For example, the guidelines on children and armed conflict have stated that the EU will consider a country's children's rights record during the renewal of external agreements. However, as seen in the case of Iraq, no consideration is taken into account during the amendment of external agreements between the EU and Iraq. Instead, as seen in the Council conclusions of 2017 and 2019, children's rights were taken out of conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2017a, 2019). Despite this, there is a consistent emphasis on educational initiatives for all children in all cases, emphasising the CRC's principle of non-discrimination. Moreover, these commitments are translated into specific projects and funding.

However, a second trend that emerges is that there is a gap between the mainstreaming of policy processes and policy outcomes. For example, while policy processes in Afghanistan have indicated a full commitment towards the CRC, including child participation and empowerment, this has not translated into actions to realise this commitment. In contrast, while Iraq and Libya lack references towards children's rights, the policy outcomes have demonstrated a more substantial level of mainstreaming through various projects.

Nevertheless, policy processes and outcomes primarily emphasise protection and provisional rights, often overlooking the child's best interest and capacity to act on their behalf. Consequently, policy outcomes most often address the general principle of the right to life, survival, and development, as opposed to the other principles. For example, while EU-Jordan partnership priorities (2021) emphasise the political participation of youth, this is not reflected in any policy outcome, while the commitment towards improving education and assistance of the workforce is (Council of the European Union, 2021). Despite this, there is a growing recognition of children as active rights-holders in policy outcomes, particularly in Libya and Lebanon, demonstrated by projects such as promoting child participation in decision-making processes and promoting child-friendly justice

systems. Although there are emerging trends towards empowering children, actions and commitments remain limited.

The different levels of mainstreaming of the CRC into various EU foreign policy operations can be attributed to the development of the norm cycle of children's rights within EU foreign policy. This is specifically because the norm of protecting children has been inconsistently internalised by EU foreign policy actors and delegations (García Iommi, 2020).

The historical analysis has demonstrated that the EU has increasingly made an explicit commitment to the CRC's general principles in the EU legal framework and communications by the commission, indicating that the norm of mainstreaming the CRC into EU foreign policy has emerged. This has led to the norm cascade stage, where member states and policymakers of EU foreign policy strategies and documents have increasingly addressed children's rights. While direct references to the CRC were absent in many instances, there was a clear trend towards addressing children's rights in EU external relations. For example, the EU Strategic Compass of 2022 affirmed the EU's role in protecting conflict-affected children, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of children's rights in EU foreign policy discourse.

However, the emphasis on protection and provision over empowerment in many EU documents, both general and in specific operational contexts, highlights that the norm of recognising children as agents has not reached the stage of norm cascade. Instead, society and policymakers still view children, especially in the context of armed conflict, as victims in need of protection. That said, the projects in Libya and Lebanon suggest this might change (EEAS, 2019b, 2020). While some level of internalisation exists, such as the establishment of educational projects, the full integration of children's rights norms into the EU's identity and behaviour remains inconsistent. As García Iommi (2020) demonstrated, for a norm to be fully internalised, it must acquire three characteristics: formal validity, social recognition, and cultural validation.

The historical analysis establishes the formal validity of CRC principles, yet the case studies demonstrate significant variations in social recognition and cultural validation. In Lebanon and Jordan, for instance, the significant mainstreaming of CRC principles into policy processes and outcomes, demonstrated by educational programs and funding for UNICEF initiatives, indicates significant social recognition by EU officials. Moreover, it indicates a high level of cultural

validation by applying general commitments towards promoting education in different cultural contexts (García Iommi, 2020). However, in Iraq and Libya, the absence of direct references to children's rights in operational mandates reflects a lack of internalisation of CRC principles in policy processes despite efforts to mainstream these rights through specific projects. Despite this, the EU has mainstreamed children's rights in policy outcomes through funded projects addressing education, youth inclusion, and juvenile justice, which indicates the application of CRC principles in different cultural settings by EU delegations. However, this does suggest a gap between the EU Council's social recognition and the EU delegation's cultural validation.

The extent of mainstreaming CRC principles varies across contexts due to the limitation of the norm cycle of children's rights. Consequently, to fully internalise the norm of promoting and protecting children's rights in EU foreign policy operations, there needs to be more social recognition within the delegation and more cultural applications by the delegations in cooperation with the third state. While limited, the EU does demonstrate a commitment towards this end. This is demonstrated by ongoing efforts to support education, youth participation, and juvenile justice improvements, as well as political dialogues, indicating a gradual, somewhat uneven, progress towards fully integrating the CRC principles and norms into EU foreign policy.

### *Limitations*

While this research provides valuable insights, several limitations may affect the interpretation of the findings. First, the analysis relies on available data from EU documents, operational mandates, and policy documents. However, much data is not publicly accessible, potentially leading to an incomplete picture of the full extent of the EU's children's rights mainstreaming efforts. This limitation underscores the need for more comprehensive data collection and transparency in reporting.

Second, the research may not fully represent the cultural contexts of the regions studied. The integration and implementation of CRC principles can vary significantly across cultural settings. EU delegations and policymakers might not mainstream CRC principles into certain foreign policy contexts as they infringe upon domestic matters. Such reluctance may arise from fears of worsening diplomatic relations, which can hinder the implementation of children's rights initiatives. However, the analysis does not fully capture these nuances.

Lastly, while the case studies provide an in-depth analysis of mainstreaming children's rights in the MENA region, the findings may only partially present all EU foreign policy operations. Different regions and contexts may exhibit varying levels of commitment and success in integrating CRC principles, and the results from the MENA region might not be generalisable to other areas. Moreover, the perception of children in armed conflict as victims by the EU might not be true in other settings.

## **Conclusion**

### *Conclusion*

The research conducted in this thesis aimed to answer the following question: *To what extent has the EU mainstreamed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in its CFSD operations?* With a specific focus on the MENA region?

The findings indicate that while the EU has made significant progress in integrating children's rights into its general CFSP, mainstreaming the CRC into its operations has been limited. Moreover, the historical analysis of policy documents reveals that the focus remains on protection and provisional rights, particularly regarding education. Consequently, participation rights are less emphasised in foreign policy strategies and legal documents. Moreover, the case studies of Iraq, Afghanistan, Jordan, Libya, and Lebanon reveal different levels of mainstreaming the CRC. For example, while Jordan and Lebanon show higher levels in policy processes, Iraq and Libya do not mention children's rights at all. That said, Libya does indicate a high level of mainstreaming in its policy outcomes. Lastly, despite facing challenges in fully integrating CRC principles into operational mandates, Lebanon also shows considerable efforts of mainstreaming in policy outcomes.

The variation in mainstreaming CRC principles across different contexts can be attributed to the inconsistent internalisation of children's rights norms by EU foreign policy actors. This is reflected in the gap between social recognition and cultural validation, with some regions like Lebanon and Jordan showing significant integration of CRC principles while others, such as Iraq and Libya, do not. Consequently, to achieve full internalisation of CRC principles in EU foreign policy, there needs to be enhanced social recognition within the EU Council and greater cultural application by EU delegations in collaboration with third states.

### *Implications*

The EU must bridge the gap between Brussels and its delegations to achieve cultural validation of CRC principles. While guidelines, toolkits, and reports are available, the analysis and case studies demonstrate that increased rhetoric on promoting and protecting children's rights has not sufficiently translated into actions within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) operations. Greater prioritisation of the CRC within EU delegations is essential, and accountability and monitoring mechanisms are crucial for tracking the effectiveness of these efforts (Thompson, 2014). The findings further suggest a need for the EU to enhance its policy frameworks to fully integrate CRC principles, particularly in empowering children as active agents rather than merely focusing on protection and provision (Lee-Koo, 2018; Krutzinna, 2022).

### *Recommendations*

The research has shown that despite considerable development in its CFSP, the EU still needs to live up to its commitment on the ground. Therefore, further research is needed to understand why the CRC lacks cultural validation in EU delegations. Furthermore, accountability mechanisms should be developed to ensure the effectiveness of CRC mainstreaming within EU delegations. Moreover, as the EU has made some efforts to youth empowerment programmes in Libya and Lebanon, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of youth empowerment programmes and inclusion of children in EU operations, recognising children as active participants in policy formulation and implementation, not just recipients of protection and provision. Lastly, as the research primarily focused on mainstreaming children's rights in the MENA region, further research needs to be conducted on other areas of EU operation to fully capture the EU's efforts of mainstreaming children's rights.

Ensuring that CRC principles are fully integrated into all levels of EU foreign policy operations requires a commitment from EU delegations to prioritise children's rights in their missions. This will not only benefit children globally but also reinforce the EU's position as a global leader in promoting human rights. Therefore, the EU must use its normative power and live up to its commitment to giving the child the best it has to give. After all, well done is better than well said.

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## **Appendix**

*Table 1: Analysis historical framework*

|                                                   | <b>Direct ref<br/>CRC</b> | <b>Indirect ref CRC</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Other mention child</b>                                                     | <b>Themes/principles</b>                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Maastricht Treaty</b>                          | No                        | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | No                                                                             | GP: -<br>Theme: -                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Amsterdam Treaty</b>                           | No                        | Yes:<br>- Prohibit age discrimination<br>- combat crimes such as trafficking of people and offences against children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | No                                                                             | GP: non-discrimination<br>Theme: protection                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Nice Treaty</b>                                | No                        | Yes: same as Amsterdam                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | No                                                                             | GP: -<br>Theme: -                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Lisbon Treaty</b>                              | No                        | Yes:<br>- Art 3(3): promote the protection of the rights of the child<br>- Art 3(5) in relations third states observe int'l law (includes CRC)<br>- Art 63(2d) obliges EU to adopt measures in regards to trafficking of children<br>- Article 6 of the Lisbon treaty: Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union shall have the same legal status of the treaties | No                                                                             | GP: -<br><br>Theme: protection<br><br>General reference to CRC as protection of the rights of the child                                                                            |
| <b>EU charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU</b> | No                        | Yes<br>- Art 14: right to education<br>- Art 24: incorporates the CRC's general principles, including the consideration of the child's best interest, the right to participation and the right to life.<br>- Art 32: prohibits child labour and provisions on the protection of youth in the workplace according to their age                                               | No                                                                             | GP: consideration of the child's best interest, the right to participation and the right to life, survival and development.<br><br>Themes: Provision, protection and participation |
| <b>EU security strategy (2006)</b>                | No                        | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Calls for effective implementation of UNSCR 1612 (children and armed conflict) | GP: -<br><br>Theme: -                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                                                              | Direct ref<br>CRC | Indirect ref CRC                                                                                                                                                                                          | Other mention child                                                                                                                                           | Themes/principles                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Handbook on CSDP missions and operations (2015)</b>                       | No                | Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CSDP priority of protect civil partic children in armed conflict</li> <li>- CSDP planning: improve child protection + upholding children's rights</li> </ul> | vulnerability of child as recruitment of child soldier                                                                                                        | GP:<br><br>Theme: protection<br><br>General commit to upholding children's rights     |
| <b>Global strategy EU CFSP (2016)</b>                                        | No                | No                                                                                                                                                                                                        | step up humanitarian efforts in origin/ transit countries of migrants and refugees                                                                            | GP: -<br><br>Theme: -                                                                 |
| <i>Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1 (2017)</i>                     | No                | Semi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mention of provisions for children</li> <li>- Mention of helping children</li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- project on provision of education (Lebanon and Jordan)</li> <li>- Reintegration child soldiers (Colombia)</li> </ul> | GP: right to life, survival and development<br><br>Theme: provision                   |
| <i>Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 2 (2018)</i>                     | No                | Semi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mention of provisions for children</li> <li>- Mention of helping children</li> </ul>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food, shelter and education (Lebanon and Jordan)</li> <li>- Reintegration child soldiers (Colombia)</li> </ul>       | GP: right to life, survival and development<br><br>Theme: provision                   |
| <i>Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 3 (2019)</i>                     | No                | Semi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mention of provisions for children</li> </ul>                                                                                                               | education assistance (Lebanon and Jordan)                                                                                                                     | GP: right to life, survival and development<br><br>Theme: provision                   |
| <b>EU strategic compass (2022)</b>                                           | No                | Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- protecting children</li> <li>- EU role in external action to protect and help conflict-affected children (including through CSDP action)</li> </ul>          | Two references to committing and promoting the children and armed conflict agenda                                                                             | GP: right to life, survival and development, (Best interest)<br><br>Theme: protection |
| <i>Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass (2024)</i> | No                | No                                                                                                                                                                                                        | No                                                                                                                                                            | GP: -<br><br>Theme: -                                                                 |

Table 2: Analysis case studies

|                    | Direct ref<br>CRC<br>mandate /<br>council | Indirect ref CRC<br>mandate / council                                                                              | Direct ref<br>CRC<br>activities | Indirect ref CRC<br>activities                                                 | Themes / principles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Iraq</b>        | No                                        | No (Reference to<br>child 2017<br>conclusion)                                                                      | No                              | Yes<br>- Education<br>- Humanitarian<br>assistance<br>children in<br>detention | <u>GP process:</u> -<br><u>Themes process:</u> -<br><br><u>GP outcome:</u> right to<br>life, survive and develop<br>+ non-disc<br><u>Themes outcome:</u><br>provision                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Afghanistan</b> | No                                        | Yes<br>- council<br>conclusions<br>state priorities<br>to child rights<br>- 3P included                            | No                              | Yes<br>- Education<br>(CSDP no)<br>- protect violence                          | <u>GP process:</u> right to life,<br>survive and develop &<br>participation + non-disc<br><u>Themes process:</u> prov,<br>protect& participation<br><br><u>GP outcome:</u> right to<br>life, survival and<br>development + non-disc<br><u>Themes outcome:</u><br>provision & protection |
| <b>Jordan</b>      | No                                        | Yes/No<br>- Yes in<br>priorities:<br>Empower<br>political and<br>workforce &<br>education<br>- No in<br>agreements | No                              | Yes<br>- Education<br>- Empower<br>workforce                                   | <u>GP process:</u> right to life,<br>survive & devel + non-<br>disc<br><u>Themes process:</u><br>provision &<br>participation<br><br><u>GP outcome:</u> right to<br>life, surv and develop +<br>non-disc<br><u>Themes outcome:</u><br>provision &<br>participation                      |
| <b>Libya</b>       | No                                        | No                                                                                                                 | No                              | Yes<br>- Education<br>- participation<br>- Child friendly<br>justice           | <u>GP process:</u> -<br><u>Themes process:</u> -<br><br><u>GP outcome:</u> right to<br>life, survive and develop<br>+ non-disc<br><u>Themes outcome:</u><br>provision + participation<br>+ protection                                                                                   |
| <b>Lebanon</b>     | No                                        | Yes/No<br>- Yes in<br>priorities:<br>education and<br>child protect<br>- No in<br>agreements                       | No                              | Yes<br>- Education<br>- Child friendly<br>justice<br>- Participation           | <u>GP process:</u> right to life,<br>surv and develop + non-<br>disc<br><u>Themes process:</u><br>provision + protect<br><br><u>GP outcome:</u> right to<br>life, survive and develop<br>& particip + non-disc<br><u>Themes outcome:</u><br>provision, protection &<br>participation    |