

## **External Action of the European Union in Crisis Situations**

### ***Conclusions of a Workshop at the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) in Madrid, 21 and 22 April 2005***

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On April 21 and 22, the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), and the Centro Internacional de Información y Documentación Internacionales de Barcelona (CIDOB), in collaboration with the Toledo International Centre for Peace (TICpax) and the Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales (CEPC), organised a workshop in Madrid designed to identify and analyse practical problems in the development and implementation of EU crisis management mechanisms.

The workshop was attended by EU representatives in conflict zones, officials from the European Commission, military authorities within the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) framework, experts, and members of civil society. The first day consisted of open sessions, dedicated to individual presentations on specific aspects and experiences of crisis management, open to the public. The second day consisted on a closed session dedicated to proposals on how to improve the Union's crisis management performance.

The present conclusions summarize the main problems identified and the suggestions made to resolve them. The debate focused on three main areas of concern: nature and scope of EU crisis management, issues related to the development of civil and military capabilities (including the decision-making process, troop deployment, the division of labour amongst actors, rapid response, and recruitment of civilians), and analysis and evaluation.

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## **Defining the Scope**

1. The workshop raised a range of questions regarding the **nature, objectives and scope of EU crisis management**, many of which still remain open. The fact that the EU lacks a clear-cut definition as to what constitutes EU crisis management does not contribute to a comprehensive debate on the matter. However, in order to define a mission as an EU crisis management operation, three basic criteria were mentioned: it must be a substitution, monitoring, or mentoring mission; involve a politically visible number of Member States' personnel; and with the control over political direction and strategy lying in the hands of the Union.

2. A widely acknowledged criticism consisted in the Union's **lack of an overall vision** for EU crisis management in the longer term. There is no clear idea as to what will or should be the role of the EU as an international security actor two or three decades ahead. The current pillar structure, a natural result of the EU's piece-by-piece genesis, forms an obstacle to a really integrated, multidisciplinary work. A vision, defined as a long-term view of how we see our environment in two or three decades, cannot be replaced by a strategy, which pinpoints how we plan to shape that environment according to our purposes.

3. The European Security Strategy (ESS), which was appreciated by participants as a qualified and useful piece of thought, remains however limited and does not replace an earnest reflection on where we want to go by means of our present and future endeavours. As stressed in the ESS, we need "to think globally and to act locally", see both the trees and the forest. The wording of this vision should indicate the EU's willingness to take an effective global scale role in international security and co-operate with the United States on an equal foot, in particular through NATO. Likewise, long-term thinking needs to be applied within every mission from the very beginning, to be able to anticipate its consequences and future implications, and to provide a sound basis for future decisions on the political level.

4. Defining the scope of EU crisis management under the ESDP framework also requires a clear concept of **political priorities**, especially against the background of the scarceness of resources. Any crisis management operation requires a true sense of priority, including the provision of resources which, subsequently, need to be pointed towards these priorities. Both regional and thematic priorities must be traceable and justifiable, from an ethic as well as from a financial point of view. We have to know why we engage in one region and not in another, why we engage, for instance, in Georgia, but much less so in Rwanda and Burundi. The need for assistance - this can be easily concluded from the patterns of past and present regional priority-setting - is not, at present, the driving force for deployment. This becomes especially clear when turning towards Africa, where constant instability and large-scale humanitarian disaster most urgently require European engagement, but which at the same time faces the biggest difficulties for the procurement of troops from EU member states. Moreover, the different political priorities

of Member States, deriving from historical ties, inhibit the emergence of a sole EU strategy. Having an eye on the regional dimension is indispensable for any mission, in order to understand how the conflict relates to the region, take into account the possible consequences on neighbours, and to apply lessons learned.

5. Parallel to the geographical priorities, there must be a common understanding of the thematic scope of EU crisis management, whether we should focus on short-term security or expand the activities towards long-term state-building. To some, the scarceness of resources constitutes an imperative to concentrate efforts on containing immediate violent conflict, rather than spending energy and money on changing societies. Some participants were also concerned that a too broad definition of the scope of missions under the ESDP framework would not only draw off resources from those cases where assistance is most urgently required, but also entail the danger of overstraining the ESDP framework by putting under its umbrella things which could just as well be done under other frameworks or by other organizations.

6. In this context, the issue of **conditionality** in development policy and whether it constituted an appropriate tool for EU crisis management was repeatedly raised. This is an issue which arouses widespread concern, since in many occasions, its value as an incentive has been questionable. If aid is not being spent effectively, it is being wasted. While the linkage of aid to effective spending is an understandable point of view, it does not provide an answer to what we should do with those countries where there is no prospect of aid being spent effectively. Participants largely agreed that when considering the option of conditionality, it is necessary to make a distinction between urgent humanitarian assistance on the one hand, which cannot be conditioned by any means, and development assistance and less urgent humanitarian assistance on the other. In the latter case, benchmarking and conditionality were considered important. Moreover, the EU should not be too rigid with conditionality in weak states, but in fact demonstrate more flexibility in case a state is willing but simply lacks the capacity to perform. The EU's relations with Rwanda and Burundi also gained special emphasis as an example in this context. It was agreed that the EU's position towards both countries was rather weak, and that in spite of the undisputable challenges entailed in the relation, the EU should place more pressure on both countries regarding their democratic deficits.

7. Another important issue regarding the identity of EU crisis management is to ensure that the **values underlying** EU crisis management operations actually match the missions' realities. This is especially appropriate in the case of those substitution missions in which the initial reason for deployment - the maintenance of human rights - is thwarted by disrespect of human rights on the part of the very mission staff. Here, stricter controls through guidelines and limitations are wanted.

## **Development of Capabilities**

8. Any crisis management mechanisms lose their credibility if they are unable to respond immediately, adequately and effectively to arising crises through rapid deployment. The preconditions for this on EU level are the availability of the necessary capabilities (for all kinds of operations envisaged in the ESDP framework), and a smooth and effective **decision-making process** to deploy, direct and control them, both of which the EU is currently still developing. First important achievements partially in place in this area are the rapid response concept, the battlegroups and the civil-military planning cell. The main obstacles to smooth and rapid decision-making are posed by conflict of interests and differences in political priorities between Member States, as well as between national and EU levels. The rising number of Member States complicates the process further, since the overall decision must be preceded and/or followed by twenty-five individual decision-making processes. This is a dilemma which, at present, cannot be resolved, as the EU is not a single sovereign entity and capabilities are provided by Member States, which naturally and understandably reject any attempt by the Union to diminish, for the sake of efficiency, their say as to how these capabilities are being employed.

9. The centralized and protracted decision-making processes also seriously hamper the effectiveness of the Special Representatives' work in the terrain. The position of the EU Special Representative – itself generally regarded as a very useful institution – can only fulfill its tasks if granted the autonomy and scope of action necessary to provide the flexibility urgently needed in fragile crisis situations, where success often depends on rapid response within a small window of opportunities. Enhancing the capacity of Special Representatives in mobilizing resources and activating political processes would greatly increase their positive impact in conflict situations.

10. Regarding the relation between Member States and EU institutions, it was expressed that the lack of Member States' commitment was partially due to their perception of the Union as an organization which developed its own dynamics and ideas, in practice frequently applying a top-down approach to what in fact should be decided bottom-up, thereby leaving too little space for the single Member State's priorities. The fact that political perspectives on the national and on the EU levels differ considerably, due to different priorities, domestic pressures and constraints, is too often ignored by both sides. The EU points out the necessity of flexibility, political will and supply of resources, whereas Member States face difficulties in approving operations and therefore focus on the feasibility. Given the political constraints in individual Member States, it is inevitable that Member States sometimes have to introduce caveats to get the operation approved at all. Moreover, the EU's call for "more flexibility" is often meant as giving more power to the High Representative, thereby taking away power from the Member States.

11. On the other hand, the EU is closer to the real needs of the missions and is thus more competent to identify requirements. However, there was agreement that, unlike EU personnel on the ground, the institutions in Brussels are to some extent still reigned by bureaucratic thinking and particularly lack practical understanding of the real problems and needs of a mission in a crisis situation, a deficit which can prevent the right decisions to be brought forward on time.

12. The cautiousness of the decision-making process implies a certain risk that the **deployment of troops** may take too long. But the speed and efficiency of the process of political decision-making to launch a mission determines in the end how effective we can get in terms of rapid response. At present, most instruments available to the Commission are too inflexible regarding the deployment of missions due to the three, four and even five-year project cycle which has been imposed on the Commission by Member States, thus hampering the flexibility of action required in the terrain.

13. The biggest issue in the development of military capabilities is the lack of a real common approach to the problem by Member States. Military resources are based mostly on national force planning, so that, while some capabilities are redundant, others are lacking. Military action is the hard end of crisis management, and the EU's past aspirations in this respect have only been partially satisfied. It was argued that Member States tend to leave aside the hard tasks because they back off from internal pressures and are incapable of justifying the financial and human resources needed by crisis management missions to their electorate. Some participants ascribed this to constraints imposed on policy makers by the national legal frameworks. Others perceived it as a serious lack of political leadership on the part of the Member States' leaders, with governments failing to make the public understand the reasons for the deployment of peacekeeping missions, including the justification of financial cost and, most importantly, casualties.

14. Public information regarding crisis management operations could be facilitated through the enhancement of competencies and autonomy of the EU Special Representatives. The corresponding leverages and instruments could be delegated and entrusted to Special Representatives and Special Envoys on the ground, in order to ease their mission through the creation of transparency towards the public.

15. Some participants additionally expressed their fear that industrial and technical interests such as market competitiveness and jobs, instead of needs assessment, were the driving rationale for how capabilities were developed. While inducing countries to provide military resources is extremely difficult, there is a great economic interest both from the Union and the defence industry in getting the EU to play a bigger military role. The incentive in founding the European Defence Agency (EDA) from the Commission's side was the release of the highest

budget ever to fund defence, which would be partly channelled by the EDA, and which provides a great incentive for the Member States to get together for the sake of their defence industries. On the one hand, it was argued, it was legitimate that the EU tries to prevent being dependent on the US defence market, but on the other hand, this showed that capabilities are not necessarily developed for the existing needs and the right reasons.

16. In the field of **rapid response**, the view was expressed that the newly created battlegroups may provide a significant added value to the EU's crisis management capabilities, but this key effort must be brought to completion as planned. The very high readiness requirement implies moreover that every rapid response package be fully established, trained and combat organized before it is made available for possible employment. However, the battlegroups may not be fitted to the requirements of all types of operations. Given their small size of 1500 troops and independent command structures, the deployment of battlegroups is much more reasonable in small-scale operations than in bigger ones where the deployment of a multitude of individually operating entities does not make much sense. A single battlegroup will normally be employed as a means of either preventive intervention or rapid response to accomplish a complete mission of short duration or to action as the entry force for operations of longer timescale, to be continued or completed by follow-on lower readiness formations. For bigger conflicts, rapid reaction capacity will largely depend on whether the EU will manage to build up the planned 50.000 to 60.000 troops force (as stated in the Helsinki Headline Goal) to be ready for deployment by 2010, a small part of which will be planned as a rapid reaction force complementary to the battlegroups.

17. For the sake of an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, and also against the background of the scarceness of resources, **coordination among actors** is essential, internally (military-civilian) as well as with the different external actors. Reality has shown that there is a need to apply several tools, both military and civilian, because they are mutually supportive, and there was consensus that much more must be done in this respect. In the field of the division of labour in international security, the EU cooperation with NATO is a crucial issue. In this regard, participants expressed concerns that joint activities under the *Berlin-plus* agreements are still immature and suffer from a series of constraints, especially in terms of leadership of the mission (need for a lead nation, as France in DRC) and planning procedures (*Berlin-plus* is an ad hoc mechanism, which requires new negotiations among all Member States every time a mission is to be launched). The establishment of a general headquarters would help, in this regard, to facilitate coordination of joint operations.

18. Civilian operations have to be dealt with differently than military ones. Bureaucracy in Brussels is often too inflexible, insensitive, and on occasions even counter-productive in their treatment of **civilian personnel**. This becomes manifest for example in the rigid application of administrative regulations, the formulation of operational plans shaped for the military, and an

obsession with benchmarking even in diplomatically delicate parts of the mission. There was general agreement in the workshop that the recruitment of civilian personnel was often seriously hampered by structural and administrative constraints. When it comes to generating human resources, quality is key instead of quantity, but very skilled and specialized people willing to go on a crisis management mission are a scarce resource. Instead of providing incentives for highly skilled civilians which would make the offer attractive enough for them to temporarily leave their posts, in fact, there are more disincentives than incentives in place (i.e. facing resentment and tangible disadvantages when taking leave from their original working places). In order to be able to recruit the right people, there has to be an adequate legal environment which provides sufficient incentives. Some Member States already have such systems in place; they should serve as a model to others.

19. Moreover, a range of problems are caused by the current recruitment mechanisms via national channels, since information about the pool of experts is not centrally available. Even if it were, it would be of little use because the Union has no possibility of recruiting directly in the Member States to respond to the acute needs of the missions. Some participants thus questioned the appropriateness of the national recruitment mechanism, and - assuming it a political reality that Member States are not going to give up their veto on who they send to any ESDP operations - called at least for an appropriate modification of the national regulations. Ideally there should be a potential capacity waiting in the wings, but eventually this was considered financially disproportional against the background of the impossibility to plan ahead based on anticipated future needs. Alternatively, it was suggested to pay trained reserve personnel a small regular amount for their availability. In case of an imminent crisis, they would have to be available for deployment for a limited period of time. This kind of arrangement, it was argued, adapted much better to the daily lives of civilian personnel and thus facilitated recruitment. Finally, the workshop was reminded that for many tasks, locals are far better suited than foreigners, last but not least for the sake of local ownership.

### **Evaluation and Training**

20. Workshop participants agreed that, for analysis and **evaluation of the missions**, external support would be recommendable, considering that the missions need their full capacity to deal with the daily problems their mandate entails and have little additional margin. Moreover, external advice ensures an evaluation with a certain distance, which sees the problems of the mission more clearly and can be critical to the decision-makers on the ground. These evaluations should not only focus on administrative and logistical matters; moreover, missions should be officially obliged to carry out a serious evaluation of the impact achieved, in terms of how and to what extent the operation has actually contributed to fostering peace and stability in the country.

21. With respect to the compilation and implementation of **lessons learned**, the EU is very far behind. In fact, most experiences were already made, but the corresponding lessons are not being applied. A systematic use of previous experiences in crisis management missions could help saving lives and money, but so far the corresponding mechanisms within EU structures are missing.

22. A concrete suggestion to foster evaluation and training on EU crisis management was to establish a civilian research and training agency based on the model of the European Defence Agency. A separate organizational entity which is not integrated in the Council but operates independently and thus much more freely than any of the organization's bodies within the traditional EU bureaucracy, it was argued, would avoid the existing institutional divides. Such a **civilian crisis management agency** could help aligning the policies of the member states, be responsible for recruitment and training of the peacebuilding staff, serve as a best practices unit and provide support to the missions in terms of carrying out evaluations and spreading lessons learned. It was acknowledged that, even though there is a clear need for such an agency, at the moment there is no fund tailored to finance such policy-oriented research in the field of civilian crisis management in the EU, a fact which is remarkable considering the generous volume of resources being designated to the military side. Scepticism was expressed on the enforceability to establish yet another institution, since the idea of a civilian crisis management agency would not get the support which the EDA is enjoying due to the economic benefit of military armament for the Union, thus raising doubts that the proposal could get the necessary political support. It was thus suggested that the Union should at least draw up a separate budget line for policy-oriented research on civilian crisis management.

### **Proposals for Improving EU Crisis Management**

Summarizing the concrete suggestions made during the debate, the EU should:

- Provide a clear-cut definition as to what constitutes EU crisis management
- Formulate its long-term vision of the EU's role as an international security actor
- Develop clear geographical and thematic priorities, and eventually point resources towards them
- Try to firm up the political decision-making process for deployment through political will, enhanced efficiency, and comprehension for national priorities and constraints
- Apply flexibility when it comes to conditionality in weak states willing to improve their performance
- Take appropriate steps to dismantle the culture of too rigid bureaucratic thinking
- Enhance civil-military cooperation in an integrated, multidisciplinary approach
- Provide incentives for highly skilled civilian personnel to be recruited for EU missions

- Provide external support for the evaluation of missions
- Foster the systematic compilation and implementation of lessons learned
- Set up a fund for policy-oriented research on civilian crisis management

Member states, on their part, should:

- Foster rapid decision-making for deployment through enhanced efficiency and political will
- Commit to EU crisis management by providing not only financial but also substantial military resources
- Improve their public information and political leadership in order to make the public understand the Union's reasons for deploying crisis management operations
- Improve civilian recruitment mechanisms via national channels