

Roundtable

The role of Italy in EU peacebuilding and conflict prevention

Wednesday 4 June 2014 . 13:15 - 17:40
European Parliament Information Office in Rome
Via IV Novembre, 149 - I-00187 Roma

Report

On the main objectives of this Member State meeting was to discuss the EU's role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, as well as its history as a peace project with CSOs and policy-makers at the Member State level. Introductory remarks highlighted the fact that Italy joined the group of Member States supporting the European Institute of Peace, which shows an intention to get involved in EU policy-making in peacebuilding. Several mentions were made to Italy's reputation as 'peace-loving nation' while other comments insisted on the gap between official statements and policies supporting peacebuilding.

Some participants raised the fact that it is an interesting time to hold the meeting because of the upcoming Italian presidency of the EU but also in the aftermath of the nomination of the new parliament and government. The European elections of 25 May saw the Italian Prime Minister's party confirmed with victorious results. Expectations on the new government of Matteo Renzi are high. Italy, which has not been very active on the European scene, is back in the spotlights. Its priorities for EU have for a long time been focused the Mediterranean, especially Turkey and the Western Balkans.

Session 1: Italy's approach to EU foreign policy: what priorities for EU peacebuilding and conflict prevention ahead of the Italian Presidency of the EU?

Italy's priorities for peacebuilding and EU external action

In the context of the Italian presidency of the EU (July . December 2014), the current priorities of Italy for peacebuilding and EU external action addressed are:

- Cooperation with UN

Overall cooperation with the UN is a key priority of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, on a broad range of issues that also relate to the EU's external action. Later in 2014, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will organise a seminar on training for peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions in cooperation with Santa Anna University.

- Institute of Peace

Italy is providing support in the establishment of the Institute of Peace, which aims at supporting European efforts to respond to global peace challenges, along with other supporting States: Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Mr. Staffan de Mistura, an Italian-Swedish national, was appointed President of the Board and Ambassador Marc Otte was elected Vice President.

- The European Neighborhood

Italy has been particularly focused on the MENA region and the Western Balkans. Several tools can be used:

- Enlargement, as a peace process tool, promoting and consolidated peace. The Balkans are perceived by Italy as an important peace project. Italy will encourage the European Commission (EC) and the EEAS to keep open chapters on the enlargement process, including granting candidate status to Albania, to open negotiations with Serbia and to continue engagement with Bosnia and Montenegro.
- In the MENA region, the main point of concern for the Italian government is the deteriorating situation in Syria. It does not consider that the EU can provide a %eady-made+solution. Italy will continue to promote dialogue and is open to new ideas. In Libya, Italy promotes inclusivity in the political transition.
- Elections in Ukraine: the Italian government is aware of the work the OSCE is doing to address the situation and is hopeful that the upcoming CSDP mission to be deployed will participate in stabilising the situation.

Regarding civil society, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains a regular dialogue with civil society organisations - in particular on issues related to transitional justice, reconciliation - and realises that their work is fundamental in enforcing stable and sustainable peace.

The State of Play of Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention in EU External Action

In the current geopolitical context, the EU has been focusing on crisis response rather than prevention. However, it has developed tools in the field of conflict prevention which are at the disposal of EU institutions and Member States in foreign policy.

The Lisbon Treaty allowed for several innovations, such as the nomination of an EU High representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Catherine Ashton, who is in charge of conducting CFSP and the European External Action Service (EEAS). There is a mention of peacebuilding in article 21 c, which provides a firmer legal basis for EU action in this field. It is the first time it is mentioned in a treaty.

The Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments (K2) was created in 2011. The main objective is to mainstream conflict prevention and peacebuilding throughout external policy and the EU institutions. This means close cooperation with other directorates of EEAS and institutions involved in crisis management, such as its sister unit in the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation in the European Commission . the Fragility and Crisis Management Unit. Its missions include:

- Strengthening early warning needs;
- Conflict analysis (which is not provided by the EU so far);
- Strengthening mediation capacities;
- Reinforce key partnerships: UN, NATO, OSCE, World Bank, etc.

The key policy documents for its actions are:

- Council conclusions on conflict prevention (June 2011);
- Concept on strengthening EU mediation and dialogue capacities (2009), which promotes mediation as a tool of response to emerging crises.

The division mainly supports geographical units . for example on Syria - but also EU Delegations. It is a small unit (12 people) but can provide support to missions occasionally. Its most important roles are to provide conflict analysis, identify where conflict is likely to arise by setting up an early warning system and develop operational proposals for action.

The division is particularly open to civil society in order to receive external perspectives, develop analysis. It participates in conflict workshops with EPLO as part of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN).

The EU has a series of instruments with which it is supposed to address the conflict cycle. The EU can use its political leverage (demarches, dialogues, etc.), thematic and geographical work (for example, EU special representatives on specific regions), funding mechanisms (including the Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights). In this regard, the EU has provided a framework to use these instruments in a coordinated manner in the Comprehensive Approach. It is based on the recent policy documents below, which will be followed by an action plan in the coming months as requested by the EU member states:

- [Joint Communication](#) on the Comprehensive Approach (December 2013);
- [Council Conclusions](#) on Comprehensive Approach (May 2014).

A civil society perspective on the EU and Italy's role in peacebuilding

EPLO is now organising a series of meetings in EU Member States, to take the debate on peacebuilding to the capitals. It is important, as Member States are key decision makers in EU foreign policy. One of EPLO's main objectives is to ensure that peace and a human security approach are at the heart of EU external action. Member organisations think there is potential in the EU as a foreign policy actor but also as a peacebuilding actor because:

- The EU has power. It is the biggest development actor and the largest trading block in the world. It develops foreign policy via CFSP and CSDP (missions).
- It is a vehicle for collective action, which is positive because it can mobilise resources and be a substitute for national, uncoordinated action. It has a variety of peacebuilding actors who can and should act consistently and coherently.
- The EU itself is a peace process.

The EU is not a nation state, it is perceived as more neutral partner compared to former colonial powers for examples. It has a relatively good relationship with civil society and is considered a trusted interlocutor compared to other world powers. It has the EU membership option to offer, which is an important leverage power to be supporting peace in some third countries.

Positive developments

- Role of High Representative Vice President of the Commission (HRVP): Catherine Ashton had a supportive of EEAS playing a role in peacebuilding and mediation. EPLO welcomes the fact that Catherine Ashton has proven to be dedicated to peacebuilding, which should not be taken for granted.
- Development of expertise on conflict and peace issues: there was no conflict analysis in development assistance programming and external action until about three years ago with the creation of the EEAS and dedicated Units (K2 division in the EEAS and the Fragility and Crisis management Unit in DG DEVCO).
- Recent steps on the Comprehensive approach in EU external action (Joint Communication of December 2013, Council Conclusions of May 2014, cf. previous section on the state of play of peacebuilding in EU external action). The joint communication has nothing new but set the way for Council Conclusions, an action plan, and ultimately opens the door to producing shared analysis in the EU institutions. In this respect, the Member States have to work on a shared analysis on the EU context and the risks it is facing. They need to own the Comprehensive approach, be part of it and work together with EEAS and EC on operational level without pushing back responsibility as we have regularly seen when it comes to Foreign policy.

Challenges

1. Gap between theory and practice: there is a fragmentation for conflict response and prevention through a wide range of institutions and tools. This makes it difficult for the EU to coordinate between institutions and to liaise with CSOs.
2. The diversity and diverging interests and history among the 28 Member states, which are difficult to conciliate.
3. The human and financial resources dedicated to peacebuilding in the EU budget are insufficient compared to the ambitions and the range of issues to be addressed.
4. Focus on crisis response rather than long-term prevention, although significant progress was made. (Ukraine is an example of why such an approach fails and how conflict prevention could limit the intensity of a conflict taking place in the EU's neighbourhood).
5. Support to women in peacebuilding and working as high-level mediators both outside and inside the EU. Women need to be appointed at senior leadership positions in the EEAS, as only 20% of EEAS high level officials are women.

Policy opportunities

- EU change in leadership: MS need to debate the role of the HRVP and all actors need to ensure that the new person is likewise dedicated to peacebuilding and does not lead the EEAS towards a more hard security approach. EPLO focuses defending the project of the EU as a peacebuilding project in and of itself. Focus on mandate rather than name.
- Ongoing programming of development assistance: MS and EU institutions need to ensure they are conflict-sensitive;
- Joint programming between MS and DG DEVCO;
- Possible new European Security strategy as mentioned in the European Council conclusion of December 2013;
- Action plan to implement the Comprehensive approach called for by Member States and to be delivered in 2015.

Recommendations

The EEAS should:

- Ensure that ongoing programming of development assistance are conflict-sensitive by introducing systematic conflict analysis by the EEAS and the EC;
- Continue efforts to develop expertise on conflict and peace issues by strengthening the mandate and resources of the K2 division at the EEAS and the Fragility and Crisis management Unit at the EC.

Member States should:

- Ensure that the new High Representative for Foreign Policy is nominated for its competence and is dedicated to peacebuilding;
- Support women in peacebuilding both outside and inside the EU, where the record of gender equality at senior leadership positions is still low (only 20% of EEAS high level officials are women);

Session II: The next steps on Civilian CSDP after the European Council summit on CSDP of December 2013

The recent developments on CSDP

1. European Council conclusions of 2013

Three main points of actions which came out of the Summit, as stated in the [European Council Conclusions](#), are:

- a. Increase effectiveness, visibility and impact, including:
 - Supporting partner countries and regional organisations, through providing training, advice, equipment and resources where appropriate, so that they can increasingly prevent or manage crises by themselves;
 - Procedures and rules for civilian missions should be more flexible and speed up the deployment of EU civilian missions ("roadmap");
 - EU Maritime Security Strategy by June 2014;
 - Increased synergies between CSDP and Freedom/Security/Justice actors to tackle horizontal issues such as illegal migration, organised crime and terrorism.

b. Enhance capabilities,

The objectives are to be matched by enhancing military and civilian capabilities, including through the implementation of a Civilian Capability Development Plan. A set of generic tasks are being defined in order to achieve the objectives, e.g. determining a set of skills to learn during trainings is part of enhancing the capabilities of the personnel.

c. Strengthen Europe's defence industry

The key follow up action point of this summit is the delivery of a Maritime security strategy (delivered on 24 June) and a follow-up report to the next European Council on CSDP in June 2015. Member States are key actors, if not the key actors, in the definition and use of the CSDP as an instrument.

2. CSDP lessons learnt system

The Crisis Management and Planning Directorate of the EEAS conducts the political-strategic planning of CSDP civilian missions and military operations and supports the development of Crisis related concepts and capabilities. It is also mandated to ensure coherence and effectiveness of these activities as part of the EU Comprehensive Approach.

It recently put in place a ~~Lessons Learnt~~ Lessons Learnt+ system both on both civilian and military aspects to identify good practices and lessons and implement them. It is focused on a limited number of Key Lessons, including the Comprehensive Approach, the need for local ownership and the response to local needs.

Italy's priorities for CSDP

As CSDP has to be approved by every single Member State, the decision-making mechanism related to CSDP provides an additional incentive for Italy to participate fully in shaping it. The December Summit of 2013 showed that Member States have started to build a shared vision on CSDP. Rather than a theoretical approach, the Council chose to focus on short, pragmatic steps.

For **staff seconded by Member States to CSDP missions**, a careful yet open-minded selection is implemented. The deployed staff are expected to report to their hierarchy in the mission but also to liaise with the Italian MFA, which is responsible for their performance in some way. It provides them with training which provides for common standards for work in a mission.

The **EU Maritime Security Strategy** is a priority of the Italian presidency of the EU. A non-paper has been presented together with France, Cyprus and Malta. In this strategy, the accent is to be put on the Mediterranean. Some CSDP missions are on the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean shore and are located in complicated situation (Libya was cited as an example). This area comprises many different issues which should be dealt with by the EU at large, not only Mediterranean countries, through a comprehensive strategy. This should be the case in EU foreign policy as a whole: these borders of Europe are strategic for security reasons, but also with regards to migration. The maritime strategy is a starting point in putting together this strategy, which should touch on development policy, criminal activity related to migration, counter-terrorism and trafficking, among other things.

EPLO's perspective on the development of civilian CSDP

a. Positive developments

A positive outcome around the preparation of the Council is that CSDP is now officially being included in an overall strategy based on the Comprehensive Approach (Cf. Recommendations below), as mentioned highlighted during the Summit and in the recent adopted policy documents. From a peacebuilding perspective, the following points agreed on by the Council are particularly relevant:

- Focus on building the capacity of others, being an enabler rather than a direct actor (Point 7)
- Call for CSDP to respond to challenges related to Justice and Home affairs (point 9), including by drafting an EU Maritime Security Strategy by a Joint Communication from the Commission and the HRVP (issued 24 June 2014);
- Enhancing development of civilian capabilities and the implementation of the Civilian Capabilities Development Plan (Point 15);
- Call for funding the defence research (Point 18 and 20).

b. Key challenges

EPLO's position that civilian CSDP is a crucial tool for the EU, in that it can serve as a vehicle for collective action on the part of the EU and its Member States. However it requires reform to build on 10 years' worth of evidence on how to effectively respond to conflict.

1. Integrating CSDP in the Comprehensive Approach

EPLO's definition refers to a broader understanding of the Comprehensive Approach for the EU which is an integrated EU approach towards a third country or towards another region or group of countries. An integrated approach means that the EU has a set of objectives developed by and agreed to by all relevant EU institutions and it then has policies, tools, and activities to implement these objectives. Both the objectives and the activities may be contained in a strategy towards the country or region in question.

As mentioned earlier, progress has been made on this front as CSDP is now officially being included in an overall strategy based on the Comprehensive Approach ([Joint Communication](#) on the Comprehensive Approach (November 2013), [Council Conclusions](#) on Comprehensive Approach (May 2014)). However, more needs to be done in translating these commitments into practice:

▪ Integration of CSDP Missions into Overall EU Strategies

Feedback on some of the CSDP missions deployed reveals that there is little planning made for the mission in coordination with other EU and Member State tools and that no long term, civilian investment is planned accordingly. In-country, CSDP missions should be used as a tool to implement overall EU objectives as set out in a country or regional strategy. This would minimise

risks of wasteful and confusing duplication and ensure that the investment made in CSDP is built on by other EU activities.

- **Integration of Conflict Analysis into Mission Planning**

Similarly, the planning of CSDP missions should be informed by detailed conflict analysis setting out the causes, actors and dynamics of conflicts within each context. This would help ensure that missions have a positive impact on the conflict dynamics and would minimise the risks that they inadvertently exacerbate existing tensions. CSDP could use existing assessment of context carried out within the EEAS and the European Commission.

2. Predominance of military planning over civilian missions

Other recommendations focus on the predominance of military planning, evaluation of missions and the relation with local populations.

- **Review of underlying concepts**

When civilian CSDP developed it was a foresighted and cutting edge approach to conflict which has since been taken up by other international actors. However, more than ten years after the first CSDP missions were deployed it is time to update the concepts underlying CSDP in order to integrate the wealth of evidence on effective response to conflict which has been generated in the meantime.

- **Rigorous and Participatory Evaluation of CSDP Missions**

Significant positive steps have been made to improve the evaluation of CSDP missions, notably by the Capabilities, Concepts, Training and Exercises Division inside CMPD and through cautious widening of consultation during strategic reviews.

3. Improvement of the Relationship between CSDP Missions and Local Populations

This would help improve accountability towards some of the intended beneficiaries of CSDP, i.e. populations in conflict-affected countries. An effective consultation process, which ensures that local communities' concerns are taken into account in the planning and conduct of operations, would also improve the missions understanding of the context in which they are operating and their ability to support the development of security and justice for people.

Recommendations

Member States should:

- Provide sufficient budget resources to fund new missions and equipment for partner countries (training & equipment);
- Allow more flexible rules and conditions of deployment of CSDP missions, which is conducive to rapid response;
- Train national experts that are seconded to missions;
- Initiate a deeper review of underlying concepts of CSDP in order to integrate recent evidence on effective response to conflict which has been generated in the last decade, including by defining their involvement in the further development of civilian CSDP and sharing their experience in specific areas.

The EEAS should:

- Continue to integrate CSDP Missions into Overall EU Strategies to implement EU objectives, minimise risks of wasteful duplication and ensure that the investment made in CSDP is built on by other EU activities;
- Integrate conflict analysis into mission planning setting out the causes, actors and dynamics of conflicts within each context, which would help ensure that missions have a positive impact on the conflict dynamics and would minimise the risks that they inadvertently exacerbate existing tensions;
- Build on recent positive steps to design rigorous and participatory evaluation of CSDP missions, to include assessment of the impact of CSDP missions on the context, as well as development of indicators of success and wider consultation of stakeholders, including intended beneficiaries, in evaluation;
- Improve the relationship between CSDP missions and local populations, including civil society and government, and accountability towards the intended beneficiaries of CSDP through an effective consultation process and communication about the mandate, activities and contingency plans of the missions.
- Provide a framework for civil society to be more involved in EU measures related to peacebuilding (e.g. peace civilian corps to be deployed in conflict-affected countries or include NGO in training workshops provided to CSDP and EEAS staff).

Civil society organisations should:

- Provide feedback and input for strategic reviews of missions, as organised by EPLO through informal working groups;
- Provide expertise on local conditions and local needs;
- Provide a "reality check" to Brussels-based staff in charge of CSDP missions.

This meeting is part of EPLO's EU Member State Advocacy. The purpose of this work is to mobilise support for EU peacebuilding in the EU's Member States given that they remain key decision-makers in EU policy. The work was piloted under the Civil Society Dialogue Network, which is a three-year project co-funded by the European Union (Instrument for Stability) aimed at facilitating dialogue on peacebuilding issues between civil society and EU policymakers. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).



With the support of the Europe for Citizens Project of the European Union