

Summary: EPLO Statement on the EEAS mid-term review:

An opportunity to strengthen the EU's capacity to prevent conflict and build peace¹

The mid-term review of the European External Action Service (EEAS) takes place at a challenging time for the EU. The economic crisis has directed attention away from EU's role as foreign policy actor and has affected how the EU is perceived internationally. The extent to which Member States support the EU, and the EEAS in particular, in developing and leading a common EU foreign policy is an on-going discussion.

Nonetheless, the **review provides an opportunity** to assess how far the EEAS has helped the EU to meet the Lisbon Treaty commitment to 'preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security' (Article 21.2(c)). It is an opportunity to reflect on what kind of actor the EU should be. The variety of tools at its disposal, its identity as a peace project and its long-term commitment to conflict-affected countries are just some of the factors that contribute to the EU's comparative advantage as a foreign policy actor: its role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

This statement sets out how the review can be used to make the EEAS - and in turn, the EU - **more effective at conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and therefore as a foreign policy actor**, based on EPLO's previous analysis of the establishment and development of the EEAS.²

The mid-term review provides the opportunity to:

1. Build up conflict prevention and peacebuilding expertise by

- Maintaining the current level of financial and human resources for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the EEAS. The Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments needs at least 13 officials with conflict expertise (including for instance conflict analysis; mediation and dialogue; gender, peace and security) and that the budget line for conflict prevention and peacebuilding needs to be maintained in the annual budgets for the EEAS.
- Helping Member States assess how they can develop the EEAS's conflict prevention and peacebuilding capacity (e.g. by seconding nationals with the right expertise, funding relevant research and adapting the Eight Research Framework accordingly).
- Proposing amendments to the Staffing Regulations of Officials of the European Communities (Staffing Regulation) as part of the review so that the EEAS can recruit the relevant independent experts as well as staff from EU institutions or the diplomatic services of Member States.

2. Support long-term preventive action, not crisis response by

- Assessing the added value of the Managing Directorate MD for Crisis Response and Operational Coordination, which has perceived privileged status and has caused problems for EEAS, including competition with ECHO and DG DEVCO and the diversion of EEAS resources to humanitarian assistance, despite Member States continued support for long-term and preventive action in the Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention from June 2011.
- Considering transferring staff from the MD with experience in working on political crises into the Directorate for Security Policy and Conflict Prevention (and those dealing with humanitarian aspects to ECHO).
- Continuing to develop guidance on conflict prevention in EU policy-making.
- Encouraging and supporting co-operation the Division and other parts of the EEAS (e.g. geographical divisions), for instance by rewarding co-operation in performance evaluations.

3. Limit the fragmentation of responsibility for response to conflict by

- Proposing an amendment to the Council Decision that established the EEAS so that the crisis management bodies do not need to report directly to the HR/VP but can be integrated in the Directorate for Security Policy and Conflict Prevention.

- Proposing the integration of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) into the EEAS (Directorate for Security Policy and Conflict Prevention) and the amendment of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities to delegate the financial authority for the Instrument for Stability to the EEAS.

4. Improve co-operation with other EU institutions by

- Reviewing the relationship between the Division in the EEAS and the Unit for Crisis Management and Fragility in DG DEVCO, including the functioning of the conflict prevention group and suggesting practical ways for the two entities to work effectively together.
- Strengthening the HR/VP's role as VP of the European Commission by chairing the group of external relation Commissioners on a regular basis.
- Including conflict prevention as a topic to be covered in these meetings.
- Incentivising co-operation with European Commission services, especially DG DEVCO and DG Trade by rewarding good working relationships in performance evaluations.
- Assessing the involvement of the EEAS in matters related to trade policy and EIB loans both at the delegation and in Brussels to ensure that both are conducted in the context and the principles of EU external action and are part of a comprehensive approach.

5. Improve management and staffing by

- Developing job profiles for members of the corporate board; ensuring that the Chief Operating Officer leads on the organisational management, tackling problems e.g. competition between directorates, low staff morale and gender balance, not policy issues.
- Proposing specific measures to overcome the gender imbalance within the senior management of the EEAS, including through critically assessing recruitment criteria and processes and the adoption of quotas as a temporary measure. Member States should propose at least one woman for every man for senior level positions at the EEAS, including CSDP missions, monitor and evaluate gender balance at senior levels.
- Using the review to discuss expectations for the senior management of the EEAS, including the role of the HR/VP, decide on the skills required of the next HR/VP and develop a recruitment process to ensure appointment of the right candidate.

6. Draw on the findings of evaluations of EU assistance and recent international policy developments to strengthen the EEAS by

- Proposing ways in which the main findings of these evaluations can be implemented within the EEAS, including the findings that the EEAS needs to:
 - develop integrated strategies that bring together a range of different EU institutions including CSDP missions;
 - clarify concepts and ways in which EU action addresses the different stages in the conflict cycle;
 - leverage financial with non-financial support in conflict-affected countries;
 - guarantee a systematic approach to conflict analysis as a basis for developing country or regional policies and the programming of external funding instruments;
 - develop benchmarks for EU support to e.g. rule of law work, security sector reform.
- Assessing how Member States are involved in the drafting of country or regional strategies and ensuring that they are implicated in detailed discussions about the overall objectives of the EU's engagement in any given context.
- Assess the working relations between national embassies and EU delegations to ensure that they are working together constructively.
- Ensuring that the evaluation unit of DEVCO evaluates EEAS, or establishing an internal evaluation capacity within the EEAS.

¹ For more information, please see the accompanying statement, available [here](#).

² For EPLO's previous analysis of the establishment and development of the EEAS, please see: <http://www.eplo.org/european-external-action-service>.