

Putting Peace at the Heart of the European External Action Service

I. Seize the Opportunity

The EU has made significant progress in developing its Common Foreign and Security Policy and in expanding its assistance to developing and conflict-affected countries. A recent Voice of the People survey shows that people across the world prefer the EU to intervene rather than any other international actor. However, the EU is often criticized for its lack of “coherence”, that is, multiple EU actors often operate within the same country pursuing distinct and at times conflicting objectives; responsibilities for response to conflict are divided between the Commission and the Council.

The Lisbon Treaty includes peacebuilding and conflict prevention as objectives of EU external action, stating that the EU’s aims are to ‘promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples’ (Art. 3.1) and to ‘preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security’ (Art. 21.2(c)).

The External Action Service offers an unprecedented opportunity for the EU to put in place the institutions and policies to meet its commitments to conflict prevention and building peace. There is a risk, however, that it will perpetuate or even exacerbate the EU’s inefficiencies, incoherence and over-bureaucratisation, with a triplication of responsibilities for foreign relations.

II. Promote Institutional Integration

In line with the whole-of-government approach (where states bring all relevant agencies together to develop common objectives and to work jointly towards meeting them), a whole-of-EU approach would bring all relevant EU institutions and agencies under the auspices of the new service. In concrete terms, this means integrating existing structures and institutions and functions into the EEAS so that the EU can take an integrated approach to conflict.

This is distinct from the model of coordination which currently applies, where different agencies and institutions develop their own objectives and work towards meeting them but coordinate, that is, share information about what they are doing.

EPLO recommends that the EEAS should bring together as many as possible of the directorates general with responsibility for the EU’s external policies, ideally to include at least part of DG RELEX, DG Development, ECHO, EuropeAid and DG Trade, plus the crisis management structures of the Council Secretariat, thus integrating all the EU’s foreign affairs policies into one coherent political and operational framework. The EU Delegations should also be integrated into the EEAS.

III. Increase the Status of Peacebuilding

The EU has a raft of excellent policy commitments on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, but they are often overridden by other concerns. The EU does not need more grand strategies; it needs practical, mature, well-resourced action to implement its commitments to peace. For the EEAS to deliver the EU’s commitments, peacebuilding needs to have adequate status within the Service so that it guides the EU’s strategy rather than being confined to a marginal position. A senior official with political clout needs to be responsible for peacebuilding.

EPLO supports the establishment of a **Directorate General for Peacebuilding and Crisis Management**, with a **Peacebuilding Directorate** within it, reporting to the High Representative.

The **Peacebuilding Directorate** should include:

- A unit responsible for the strategic planning and programming of the Instrument for Stability, including the Peacebuilding Partnership team with an increase in staff and resources
- Gender experts and human rights experts, each with their distinct and necessary competencies and mandates, to ensure that gender and human rights approaches are integrated into external policies and practice
- A Mediation Support Cell which will be a focal point for mediation and cooperate with experts on peacebuilding within and outside the EEAS, including on transitional justice, gender, SSR, DDR and resource sharing

- A unit responsible for improving liaison between relevant Member State bodies and EU institutions as well as strengthening links with other relevant bodies including the UN Peacebuilding Commission, US State Department's Reconstruction and Stabilisation Unit and key regional actors, such as the African Union and the Organization of American States.

This DG should have the responsibility, status and capacity to ensure that a peacebuilding approach informs all EU external action by advising on the integration of principles of conflict sensitivity into policies and programming outside the remit of the EEAS but where a negative impact on conflict dynamics is likely (e.g. trade, energy, agriculture, development).

EPLO recommends that, at the very least, the EEAS should be responsible for developing the EU's strategy in response to **situations of fragility** where an integrated policy approach is essential.

IV. Ensure a Balance between Civilian and Military Expertise

The newly created CMPD (Crisis Management Planning Directorate) will be integrated into the EEAS. It is responsible for strategic planning of civilian and military CSDP Missions. EPLO remains concerned that the Directorate does not have sufficient civilian expertise. Of the EU's ongoing CSDP Missions, 11 are civilian and 2 are military, yet the Director and Deputy Director of the CMPD have only limited experience of civilian crisis management. In addition, the vast majority of staff members have military backgrounds and experience, with limited experience of civilian crisis management.

EPLO believes that strategic planning for civilian missions requires knowledge and experience of civilian crisis response areas which are priorities for the EU, i.e. strengthening police, the rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection. For example, planning a rule of law mission requires knowledge of institution-building in a post-conflict situation. It is as important to have planners with the relevant experience at the strategic planning level as at the operational planning level.

The European public is committed to EU action to prevent and manage conflict globally, but supports civilian and not military means of tackling conflict.

EPLO recommends strengthening the EU's civilian responses. Member States should ensure:

- There is an appropriate balance between civilian and military expertise in the CMPD
- Measures are in place to identify, recruit, train and deploy the necessary civilian experts.

V. Use the Expertise of Civil Society

Currently only 3% of the Commission's funds for peacebuilding and conflict prevention go to civil society, yet civil society has a crucial role to play in building lasting peace. For example, promoting rule of law and building democratic institutions involves supporting the public to hold institutions to account. Without that, institutions are likely to become corrupt, leading to an increased risk of conflict. If the EU does not support local people to hold their governments to account, it is hard to see how it will be able to eventually withdraw from conflict-affected countries. Thus, supporting civil society is part of its exit strategy. Similarly, EU citizens want to play a role in monitoring the EU's external actions; civil society in the EU and in conflict-affected countries increasingly has expertise in all areas of EU external affairs.

The EEAS should create a culture of and systems for regular **dialogue and collaboration with civil society, such as an annual Peacebuilding dialogue**. It should commission civil society to implement elements of its work, such as the training of EU civilian experts, and the implementation of projects in fragile contexts; meanwhile it should also support civil society's own work with grants. Delegations in third countries should, similarly, cooperate with local civil society.

VI. Support Merit-based Recruitment

Staff for the EEAS should be recruited not just on nationality quotas but also on merit, in order to attract the best candidates from across the Member States, EU Institutions and beyond. The Service should be managed to ensure that it promotes European interests and transcends national interests.

Peacebuilding and EU policy should be built into education and training for Member State diplomats. Incentives should be provided so that a period of service in the EEAS is career-enhancing.