

The EU as a conflict-sensitive international player: key actions to make the difference in 2007-2013

The links between security and development have gained unprecedented recognition in the EU¹. Violence and insecurity deter foreign investors, discourage trade and local socio-economic initiatives and provide fertile breeding grounds for organised crime and terrorism. If it is not designed in a conflict-sensitive manner, external assistance can inadvertently increase tensions and the risk of violent conflict by ignoring its causes and consequences, by undermining accountability, and by reinforcing inequality, exclusion and division.

Despite existing EU efforts to achieve conflict sensitivity², the EU and its Member States acknowledge³, and EPLO and its members regret, that there is still an “implementation gap” between policy commitments on paper and actual change in practice at country level. Making changes to the drafting and implementation of European Commission Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) will be vital to this.

Recent EU policy commitments to governance, conflict prevention, safety and security all demand explicit reference in new CSPs for 2007-2013. With regards to conflict, this will require the integration conflict prevention and peacebuilding components into all assistance sectors and, as appropriate, support to specific initiatives aimed at addressing armed violence, insecurity and conflict. At present, CSPs include a section on conflict risks, but this has not led to the systematic planning of projects in a conflict-sensitive manner. According to NGO consultations with Commission delegations, certain issues have to be addressed in order to improve the quality of Commission contribution to both

¹ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an Instrument for Stability, 20 October 2006, PE-CONS 3634/06, pp. 2-6; The European Consensus on Development, 24 February 2006, 2006/C 46/01, p. 7; Communication from the Commission: EU Strategy for Africa, 12 October 2005, COM/2005/0489 final, pp. 3-4; A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, 12 December 2003, pp. 2 and 13.

² Benita Ferrero Waldner’s opening keynote speech at the Conflict Prevention Partnership dialogue, 12 September 2006. Communication from the Commission Reinforcing EU Disaster and Crisis Response in third countries, April 2005, COM (2005) 153, § 4.13.

³ Presidency Report on EU activities in the framework of prevention, including implementation of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, June 2006, 10158/06, pp. 3,5-6,12.

development and conflict prevention⁴. EPLO therefore makes the following recommendations for improvement at all stages of the CSP cycle.

CSPs drafting stage

1. **The EU should evaluate the impact of past CSPs on conflict dynamics** and use lessons learned from this evaluation to inform future strategies.
2. **Conflict assessments should be a central tool in the drafting and revision of CSPs.** The EU could use the Commission's "check list of root causes of conflict" as a starting point for more systematic and more regular conflict analyses⁵. It should draw on international best practice and concrete experience from past and ongoing programmes to inform the analysis of conflict factors in the CSPs. Conflict assessments should make specific recommendations for how programming could be made more conflict-sensitive, including on whether to provide budget support to a country or to a particular sector, whether to provide the majority of aid through the state, and how core education, health and other development programmes will ensure that they are having a positive impact on the root causes of conflict. The EU should raise findings in discussions of donor sector working groups in order to facilitate the emergence of lessons learned.
3. **It should ensure involvement of all actors** in the process and consideration of broader conflict issues. The Commission should intensify dialogue with other donors, government officials, civil society, businesses and contractors on how to have a conflict-sensitive approach. The EU must more specifically consult and involve **civil society and non-state actors' working on conflict issues** in the drafting of the CSPs in order to benefit from their expertise and perspectives on conflict assessment and training⁶.
4. **The EC should give conflict analysis an equal priority to other forms of assessment:** field research and analysis by NGOs have led to the conclusion that the EU should integrate conflict analysis into established procedures for all types of external assistance (strategic plans, needs assessments etc.), as well as in terms of reference for implementing partners⁷. Therefore, the EU should recommend that conflict analysis be systematically carried out at each stage of the programming cycle from early planning through to evaluation: it could require systematic and qualified conflict analysis to be undertaken by implementing

⁴ Saferworld's *Improving the impact of CSPs and programming on peace and stability. Lessons learned, best practice and recommendations from the Horn of Africa*, April 2006, p. 1.

⁵ Saferworld and International Alert submission to the House of Lords Sub-Committee C., Inquiry into EU Development Policy and External Assistance, January 2005.

⁶ See, for example, *Transnational Corporations in Conflict Zones: Public Policy Responses and a Framework for action*, International Alert, September 2003.

⁷ recommendation from the CONCORD European Conference on Policy Coherence for Development, October 2006 Security and Development Working Group Report at the CONCORD European Conference on Policy Coherence for Development, October 2006.

partners according to Commission funding proposals⁸. Commission guidelines and terms of reference could specify that these partners are required to identify the conflict causes and drivers and risks (at regional, national and local levels) and to ensure the project contributes to addressing them.

Implementation stage

5. **The EU should provide support to build recipient governments' capacity for conflict-sensitive planning and programming.** The EU should support the integration of conflict analysis and systematic consideration of conflict issues into the job descriptions and mandates of specific civil servants at all levels in order to avoid the capacity-building remaining at a high policy level⁹.
6. **It should develop a short and tailored user's guide on conflict sensitivity for relevant EU staff.** Understanding the relationship between such interventions in the field of development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building and conflict dynamics is arduous for practitioners; it is essential that they are equipped with **effective tools** in order to make the right decisions (as recommend the Council of the European Union and its Member States¹⁰). The Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment Systems (PCIAS) and the Resource Pack on Conflict Sensitivity provide with general guidance and might be a starting point to make a common tool to work more efficiently towards conflict sensitive development¹¹.
7. **The EU should provide regular specialised training and tools on conflict-sensitive approaches and assessments to its staff** in delegations, Brussels headquarters and Member States embassies and capitals (as suggested in EPLO's report on the EU and its conflict prevention potential, September 2006, and the June 2006 EU presidency report on conflict prevention¹²). This should include inclusion in of specific, weighted conflict sensitivity criteria in evaluation grids used by evaluators in delegations and Commission headquarters.
8. **Create conflict sensitivity champions in each Commission Delegation.** The Commission could empower staff in each delegation to champion conflict sensitivity and to be in charge of: raising awareness and organising training sessions on conflict sensitivity within the delegation; reporting on conflict issues to headquarters; assuring the quality of the required conflict analysis by implementing partners; compiling and exchanging lessons learned on conflict; and

⁸ Conflict Sensitive Project Finance: Better Lending Practice in Conflict-Prone States, International Alert, September 2006, pp. 12-13.

⁹ Saferworld Submission on the EU CSP for Kenya: Prioritising safety, security and conflict prevention, July 2006, p. 5.

¹⁰ Presidency Report on EU activities in the framework of prevention, including implementation of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, June 2006, 10158/06, p. 6.

¹¹ <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/>

¹² Five years after Göteborg: The EU and its conflict prevention potential, EPLO report, September 2006, p. 12; Presidency Report on EU activities in the framework of prevention, including implementation of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, June 2006, 10158/06, pp. 3 and 12.

liaising with relevant governmental and non governmental actors and donors (Saferworld lessons learned from Djibouti and Somalia¹³). This would avoid treating conflict prevention in isolation.

Evaluation

9. The evaluation of CSPs is a critical component of ensuring conflict sensitivity in EC programming. **Mid-term evaluations, using country-specific indicators** can reveal the successes or failures of individual projects in mitigating existing conflict or preventing its emergence, and **enable adjustments** to be made to improve the efficacy of programming. Building conflict sensitivity into every stage of the cycle of evaluation, assessment, and implementation, will ensure that all Commission programming has a positive impact on the stability and development of partner countries.

¹³ Saferworld's Improving the impact of CSPs and programming on peace and stability. Lessons learned, best practice and recommendations from the Horn of Africa, April 2006, p. 2.