

The First Year of the Compact

How the Review Process Can Make Civilian CSDP More Capable

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The EU needs more and better capabilities in civilian crisis management to fulfill its level of ambition and to more effectively contribute to security and peace in its wider neighborhood. In this, the Civilian CSDP Compact plays an important role. It has introduced an annual review process to take stock of implementation and identify capability shortfalls. This review process has great potential to improve the way the EU and its member states plan and develop capabilities for missions.

Nearly one year ago, after years of stalling and decreasing commitment in civilian CSDP, EU member states agreed on the civilian CSDP Compact. In November 2018, they signed up to 22 political commitments, which include strengthening civilian capabilities; fostering effectiveness, flexibility, and responsiveness of civilian missions; and improving the cooperation and coordination with other EU actors like Frontex. In addition to creating new momentum, the Compact process also set two strategic goals: first, to implement the shift in strategic priorities in accordance with the EU Global Strategy of 2016; and second, to increase the level of EU member state engagement in civilian CSDP.

To comply with the deadline set by the Compact for summer 2023, close interaction is needed between European institutions and EU member states. At the European level, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission have put forward a Joint Action Plan¹ which identifies the relevant commitments and sets out actions for implementation. Yet a crucial share of the work will have to take place at the national level of the 27 EU member states. Member states recruit, train, and provide most of the personnel for civilian CSDP missions. They therefore have a key role when it comes to shaping a more capable civilian CSDP.

This is why for the first half year of the implementation of the Compact, EU member states focused mostly

on their own role. They brought together the relevant national stakeholders and drafted National Implementation Plans (NIPs). The NIPs are the basis for any further steps at the national level to review and improve processes and structures with the goal of providing more qualified personnel to civilian missions.

In the second half of 2019, the focus has shifted back to EU level: For the first time, the review process agreed in the Compact is being undertaken. It will culminate in a review conference in November 2019. The Compact sets out two main goals for this review: First, it should help EU institutions and member states identify capability gaps, address them in a cooperative effort, and improve availability of capabilities.² Second, it should make it possible to take stock of progress year by year as the deadline for completing implementation in the summer of 2023 grows closer.

This new process is relevant for the future of civilian CSDP for two reasons: It sends a key message about political will, and it could become an enabler for long-term changes in civilian CSDP capability planning and member states' cooperation on civilian capabilities.

Political implications of a civilian review

If EU member states can agree on a review design that is solid enough to detect and report undesirable developments, the review process can be an effective instrument to ensure progress toward the agreed targets. Failure to deliver would be detected. This is all the more important as the civilian CSDP Compact is a political declaration and not a legally binding document. If, over time, the review shows that particular commitments have been fulfilled, diplomats from EU member states can use that information for their strategic communications with national political leaders and ministries.

The review process also serves as an instrument to ensure progress toward the EU's own level of ambition (LoA) in civilian CSDP. It provides strategic guidance for the steps taken to reach the agreed goals – or to determine if they need to be adapted. Living up to this LoA at any given time requires a considerable investment from member states. The LoA also has long-term implications for planning capability requirements of potential future missions. At the same time, failure to reach the LoA would make it necessary to adapt it – a highly political process with major consequences for the EU's capacity to pursue its strategic interests in areas of crisis and instability.

In November 2016, the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) described the LoA for implementing the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) in the area of security and defense. Missions should contribute the following:

- 1) Responding to external conflicts and crises
- 2) Building the capacities of partners
- 3) Protecting the Union and its citizens³

The FAC then defined three possible mission types for civilian CSDP, which the EU should be capable of undertaking simultaneously, including in high risk environments and regions with underdeveloped infrastructure:

- Civilian rapid response;
- Substitution/executive missions;
- Civilian capacity-building and security sector reform missions.⁴

Finally, a solid review process with strong member state buy-in would demonstrate member states' political support for more coherent capability planning and development at the national level. In view of the EU's recent progress toward closer military cooperation, a similar long-term commitment from member states to strengthening civilian CSDP seems highly desirable. This would also conform to the long-term objective of enhancing the EU's role in the world and enabling it to act more autonomously if necessary.

The three benefits of an effective review process

In a multi-stakeholder process, an annual review process can ensure regular stocktaking and allow actors to adapt their actions in order to succeed. But it may prove to be even more significant for addressing capability gaps. With a review process, all stakeholders involved, including at the national level of the 27 EU member states, sign up to a permanent and structured exchange on capability gaps. In the long term, this could lead toward more professionalization.

EEAS and EU member states should consider three potential benefits of the review process to civilian CSDP:

- 1) Introducing a common methodology on civilian capabilities and thereby fostering coherence
- 2) Establishing a forward-looking approach to capability planning
- 3) Fostering cooperation between member states which share the same priorities

Introducing a common methodology on capabilities

A review can establish a more systematic approach to taking stock of capabilities for civilian crisis management among member states and thereby provide a better information base for EU planning and decision making. So far, the knowledge transmitted to the EU level about potentially available capabilities for civilian CSDP is fractured and insufficient.

EU member states contribute the lion's share of personnel (approx. 59 percent in April 2018⁵) to civilian EU missions. Due to the traditional focus of civilian CSDP on state capacity building, policing, and rule of law, most experts are seconded from member states' civil services, for instance police officers or prosecutors. This type of personnel has not been recruited and trained specifically for civilian CSDP, but for domestic purposes and services. Most member states thus only take domestic purposes into account when planning for future needs. Unlike soldiers, whose purpose it is to be ready for a mission abroad, civilian experts for a CSDP mission in many EU member states only get recruited once the need for a specific profile becomes clear.

A common methodology could start with the definition of an expert – or even better, the definition of an expert who would be available for missions. A second aspect would be to provide a general overview of the capabilities that member states have available and will develop for the future. So far, any discussion about capabilities for civilian CSDP missions is marred by blind spots. Gaps often become apparent only when the need for staffing a civilian mission has already become urgent.

Through an annual review process, EEAS and member states could work toward gradually harmonizing their data on national capacities and capabilities. Common indicators for monitoring and reporting would considerably improve the quality of information about the overall EU civilian capability landscape and potentially available capacities. This would not solve the problem of actually making experts available for missions, as there is no automatism in which member states make experts with suitable profiles available. Nevertheless, it would inform the EEAS' strategic planning. Member states would also be better informed when they decide on mission mandates. This would make it easier to avoid defining very specific mandates for missions which would need capabilities that are extremely limited at the national level.

Establishing a forward-looking approach to planning

The second major benefit of the review process is to allow a more forward-looking approach to capability planning. If the EEAS and EU member states have more data on existing capabilities, they can identify future capability gaps earlier on, plan for them and hopefully avoid them. So far, the EEAS conducts its scanning for capability gaps as a fairly abstract exercise without a strong quantitative basis. An approach based on concrete numbers would require annual updates by member states. Once shortfalls that endanger the LoA for civilian CSDP become known, individual member states can decide to fill the gaps through their national planning and development cycles. One example of a current shortfall is the lack of civilian experts on cyber threats whom member states can spare and deploy to a mission.

Ideally, member states will over time come to include potential contributions to international missions when planning their national capacities, and will recruit in higher numbers. Such an approach could mitigate the problem that secondments to EU and other peace operations often mean that national services get deprived of scarce resources. That in turn causes reluctance in national services to make experts available.

Fostering cooperation on civilian capability development

The third benefit of a review is to highlight opportunities for cooperation on capability development among member states. So far, there is not much cooperation among member states in this regard, as civilian capabilities are first and foremost intended to support national civil services. At least when it comes to CSDP-specific skills, cooperation would provide significant advantages,

for example sharing training courses on mission-specific skills and work fields, organizing language courses, or preparing multinational specialized teams. In order to do so, the review needs to explore common priorities among member states for their planning and capability development. Through bi- or multilateral cooperation, participating member states could save resources. Such cooperation would especially benefit member states which are willing to contribute more to civilian missions but do not have the structures, budgets, or even numbers to support particular training courses and projects.

The concept of specialized teams offers a good opportunity to test this approach. The idea is to deploy small teams on a temporary basis to add expertise to a mission. While member states with robust structures and a focus on civilian CSDP have the capacity to train and deploy such specialized teams on their own, cooperation could be an interesting perspective for others. Specialized teams could become a lab for multinational cooperation.

A review will at best highlight opportunities for cooperation, for instance on specialized teams, by collecting information about national priorities and planning. But by itself, the review will neither initiate or incentivize cooperative projects among member states. To move forward, civilian CSDP needs a proper structure to implement cooperative projects, and ideally to provide incentives for further investment in capabilities.

It may be useful to consider similar mechanisms that have been set up within the military CSDP domain. There, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) is linked to other initiatives: The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) provides EU member states with the option to create multilateral cooperation projects, for which the European Defense Fund (EDF) may in the future provide financial support.

So far, no such incentive structure exists for civilian CSDP. EU members could start by identifying or creating a structure, which could accommodate shared projects for capability development. One option would be the planned Center of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management (CoE), which will start working during the German Council Presidency in the second half of 2020. It is planned as a service provider for EEAS and member states, which will operate with a core team and additional Seconded National Experts (SNE) from participating states. So far, its potential functions include developing and advising on best practices, standard operating procedures for missions, and training standards. The CoE could enable more cooperation on capabilities if participating states use its structure to organize projects – with CoE officers coordinating, administering, and supporting them with their knowledge of best practices

and lessons learned. It would also be worth creating a modest financial fund within the CoE, to support multilateral initiatives and incentivize other member states to join.

Implementing an effective review

Installing a review process in civilian CSDP is new territory for the EEAS and member states. There are some trade-offs which must be carefully considered:

- **Flexibility versus accountability:** According to the Compact, the first review was supposed to take place in 2019, but many member states still have not decided what they want to accomplish through the process. They have only just started to discuss this now that the first review cycle is underway. Therefore, some flexibility is needed to adapt allow, enough time for the discussion and increase member states' ownership of the process. At the same time, there needs to be some accountability in order to make all actors conform to the process and keep up their efforts.
- **Inclusivity versus ambition:** Different member states have very different levels of professionalization regarding civilian CSDP. This means that they also have diverging interests when it comes to the direction and scope of the review. Some see it as a chance to exchange lessons on best practices, but dread further liabilities or interference with their national efforts. Yet the benefits described above will only materialize if member states take further steps to professionalize civilian CSDP. Some ambition for change is necessary.

Designing the review process should be a work in progress: Its setup and first rounds will focus on testing and adapting. To provide a reference point, EEAS and member states need to agree on a long-term vision of what they want to achieve through the review. Also, they should decide early on to follow the EEAS' suggestion and turn the review into a regular process that will continue beyond the Compact deadline in 2023, probably in a biannual cycle.

EEAS and member states should use the current first review cycle as a trial run. That way, they can learn from it without coming under too much pressure to present results. At this stage, it is more important to discuss the framework and categories of analysis than the current state of affairs. Any analysis should be backed by benchmarks focused on a reference point, the level of ambition (LoA). Yet the current LoA does not set any quantitative goals. A professionalized approach will require member states to negotiate a LoA with qualitative as well as quantitative goals.

The first review conference in November 2019 should serve as a forum to discuss where to take this process in

the long term. To balance flexibility with an element of accountability, EU member states should agree on priorities for implementation until the fall of 2020. They will then have a year to concentrate their efforts and to report on them in greater detail, providing more quantitative data for the next review. This can be done through benchmarks, which would help structure the process and divide it into concrete intermediate steps.

Following the first review cycles, the EEAS should invite member states to exchange views on methods and results. Such a debate on lessons learned could lead to gradual improvements in the process. The goal would be a more formalized process with greater commitments on data collection, information sharing, and reporting. If all actors agree to yearly adaptations to create a solid review process and data base, member states will have enough time to prepare the next steps without being overburdened. At the same time, they will lay the foundation for a review process which could play a central role in status quo-assessments and planning of civilian CSDP beyond 2023.

The way forward

Shaping the civilian review process will take time and require EU member states' political support. So far, many member states have been hesitant about fostering more coherence between the national approaches in civilian CSDP. Yet the crises upsetting the EU's neighborhood show the urgent need for an effective civilian crisis management. This demand could even rise over the coming years, especially with view to the crises in Syria, Libya, and Yemen. The EU must be prepared to respond. More cooperation and a farsighted approach to capability planning are needed.

With an option to continue the review process beyond 2023, a farsighted vision of its potential benefits for civilian CSDP should guide decisions how to shape the process. In four years' time, EEAS and member states will hopefully have begun to lay the groundwork for further efforts on capabilities by agreeing a common methodology. The next level of professionalization in civilian CSDP will need a closer look at member states' national approaches and planning, as these are crucial for civilian capabilities. An effective and informative review process is a necessary step toward a more forward-looking and coherent approach and to making civilian CSDP more capable.

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Notes

- 1 Council of the European Union, Joint Action Plan Implementing the Civilian CSDP Compact, April 30, 2019, <<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8962-2019-INIT/en/pdf>> (accessed October 9, 2019).
- 2 See Council of the European Union, Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the establishment of a Civilian CSDP Compact, November 19, 2018, p. 11 <<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14305-2018-INIT/en/pdf>> (accessed September 17, 2019).
- 3 Council of the European Union, Council Conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence, November 14, 2016, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22459/eugs-conclusions-st14149en16.pdf>> (accessed October 9, 2019).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 See Nicoletta Pirozzi, The Civilian CSDP Compact. A success story for the EU's crisis management Cinderella?, October 2018, p. 5, <https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%209__Civilian%20CSDP.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2019).

