

The Compact Roadmap: Towards a New Level of Professionalization in Civilian CSDP

Carina Böttcher

EU member states agreed the Civilian CSDP Compact in late 2018 to breathe new life into EU civilian crisis management. Its 22 commitments are a response to a double challenge: a rapidly changing security environment and persistent shortfalls in the planning, deployment, and conduct of missions. Implementation will be challenging. Political momentum depends on producing tangible results early on, notably through National Implementation Plans and a workable Civilian Capability Review process.

The Civilian Compact defines the framework for the civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) for the next years, if not the next decade. After the launch of the EU Global Strategy of 2016, EU member states began a strategic refocusing of the European Union's CSDP and discussed much needed changes to civilian missions. This effort was overdue, as civilian CSDP missions in the past have not been able to bring their full potential to crisis management. While there is a multitude of reasons for this, three particular problems concerning the strategic, the institutional and the capabilities dimensions stand out: First, EU member states disagreed on the focus of civilian missions: Should they keep with their traditional focus on policing, rule of law, civil administration, and security sector reform (SSR), or should they concentrate on new security challenges such as border management, maritime security, and counter-terrorism? Second, missions faced difficulties after deployment due to inflexible mandates which did not allow them to react to developments on the ground. Finally, many missions were understaffed and lacked specialized capabilities such as qualified experts.

To enhance the effectiveness of the instrument, EU member states had to address these issues. In the strategic context of the Union, it is imperative that civilian missions be effective: In the EU's vicinity, multiple, large

crises have developed in countries like Syria, Libya, and Ukraine over the past decade. Looking further afield, the EU has also started to take much more interest in the Sahel since the migration crisis illustrated the repercussions of instability in that region for EU territory. These developments highlight the need for effective EU civilian crisis management and peacebuilding, because the prevalent instability and its root causes cannot be tackled by military means alone. As a matter of fact, it is of major strategic relevance to EU member states to be capable of stabilizing neighboring regions – together with international partners or on their own, if necessary. Considering its shortfalls, civilian CSDP requires an ambitious realignment to contribute to large-scale stabilization in the future.

Strategic Dimension: A Minor Shift

With the Compact, member states struck a conceptual compromise: They reaffirmed the so-called Feira priorities¹ (the traditional tasks of civilian CSDP mandates: policing, rule of law, support to civil administration as well as SSR and monitoring) as the core focus of missions,

while adding that civilian CSDP can – along with other EU instruments – contribute to addressing new security challenges. So far, the Feira priorities have been at the heart of almost all missions.

The new compromise was preceded by a discussion on the future strategic direction and core tasks of civilian missions. In May 2018, more than 15 years after the first civilian EU mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Foreign Affairs Council stated that the “worrying transformation of the EU’s strategic environment over the past years”² made it necessary to revise the conceptual framework for civilian CSDP. A concept paper circulated by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy underlined the necessity to incorporate new tasks and outlined how civilian missions could carry them out³.

Critics of this new focus put forward two main arguments: With regard to these new security challenges they say that civilian CSDP has no comparative advantages over other EU institutions such as Frontex or Europol. They also fear that the nature of civilian CSDP, which is based on fostering partnerships with mission host countries, could be lost if the focus shifted to domestic EU interests⁴. Other EU member states argue in favor of concentrating on tasks that concern both the EU’s internal and external security, such as irregular migration, border management, and cyber and hybrid threats.

The concept realignment is a result of changes, which have already been going on for some time in practice: In fact, some mandates of ongoing missions already incorporate tasks related to the new security challenges. For instance, both EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger focus on border management, irregular migration, the fight against organized crime, terrorism, and violent extremism.

Realigning the concept to incorporate these new tasks was important: It keeps the instrument relevant to a majority of member states, and it allows EU states to plan ahead in terms of capabilities needed for future missions. Yet there is a risk is that on the ground, the ratio of traditional and new tasks could shift more and more towards the internal-external nexus. Member states could use the new concept to justify mandates that primarily serve domestic purposes and fail to address local needs. But the Feira priorities remain important: They aim at long-term stabilization through capacity building and institutional reform in complementarity to other EU instruments. Over the years, the EU has built up expertise and an impressive track record for these tasks, which is well-recognized by recipient countries. Clearly, a partial refocusing of civilian CSDP in line with the priorities of the Global Strat-

egy was necessary, but the EU should also retain these strengths.

The realignment of strategic goals in the new EU concept also carries the risk that member states could be tempted to cherry pick and invest only in missions which clearly help their domestic agenda. This would thwart a main goal of the Compact, which is to encourage broader engagement of all member states in civilian missions. Finally, the decision for both the Feira and the new tasks leaves an important question open: What will be the relationship between civilian CSDP and other EU instruments designed to deal with new security challenges? European decision-makers will need to be highly aware of all of these aspects when drawing up the next mission mandates.

Decision-Making: Improving Adaptability

The Compact decisively increases the flexibility of civilian CSDP missions: Member states can now decide on mandates that are modular and scalable. This will allow missions to adapt to local needs and developments by increasing or decreasing the number of personnel or by adding or taking away mission components. Moreover, the length of the mandate can be treated more flexibly. Instead of the usual annual mandate extensions, the EU now has a possibility to set longer mission mandates. These facilitate better planning in EU institutions and signal longer-term engagement and reliability to host countries. Previously, static and very specific mandates made it impossible for missions to adapt quickly enough to a rapidly changing crisis environment.

This new flexibility could become a game changer for civilian missions. Flexible mandates could give heads of missions more tactical autonomy in the field because they would no longer need all 28 EU states to agree even minor changes of the missions’ tasking or size. Mission conduct could become much more efficient.

To test the feasibility of this approach, member states are currently discussing a pilot project: deploying a so-called specialized teams⁵ – a small team of experts trained and deployed together to fulfill certain tasks – to a mission in the fall of 2019. This could produce valuable lessons on how to use the new flexibility for future modular mandates. However, to fully benefit from the advantages of flexible mandates would also require a change of attitude on the part of member states. In the past, national governments have shown a great liking for micromanagement. They may be tempted to try to retain full control, thereby missing an opportunity to free their Brussels-based staff from the day-to-day management of

mission conduct and allow them to concentrate on strategic guidance instead.

The second issue at the institutional level concerns strengthening the EU's integrated approach to conflicts and crises. Member states have promised to improve integrated programming, shared conflict analysis and evaluation, and the cooperation between CSDP missions and the EU Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) actors.

Integrated programming means the joint planning and close coordination of all actions taken for crisis response, stabilization, and development. The aim is to make them mutually reinforcing and create synergies between different programs. Civilian CSDP missions gather extensive knowledge about the needs and grievances of a wide range of local partners, for instance civil security forces, which they can contribute to integrated programming. The European Commission could draw on this knowledge to supply funding for better equipment or infrastructure and to make CSDP training more effective. In some mission theatres, such cooperation is already taking place in an informal manner, with positive outcomes. The main challenge to more integrated programming across different mission theaters is the prevailing competition and lack of trust between different EU entities. It is therefore important that EU institutions find a way to bring integrated programming into the everyday work of the services.

Competition and different working structures also hamper shared conflict analysis between EU actors. EU member states are now committed to improving shared conflict analysis and situational awareness. However, the only concrete proposal for systematically exchanging knowledge is to set up situational awareness platforms to connect different EU actors in the respective host countries. Such a platform can be a helpful tool for coordination in the field, but it does not solve the core problem: the low level of systematic cooperation between EU actors. Even existing tools for joint conflict analysis, like for instance the so-called Political Frameworks for a Crisis Approach (PFCA), are often omitted in the decision-making process, due to competition and mistrust between institutions. PFCA should help EU member states base their deployment decisions on an informed analysis of the country context and on the different options for an EU reaction.

To overcome this, fundamental changes in the working of EEAS and the other EU actors is needed. The sharing of conflict analysis needs to start much earlier, long before the beginning of mission planning, and it should be mainstreamed throughout every step of the process. The Compact opens a window of opportunity to review which

structures and processes already function, and where they need to be adapted in the future.

Also, actors beyond CSDP need to become more closely associated with mission planning and conduct. CSDP missions already focus increasingly on the nexus of internal and external security. At the same time, JHA actors like Frontex and Europol are extending their area of operation. Therefore, the need for closer cooperation between CSDP missions and JHA actors was reiterated in the Compact. In the future, JHA expertise will be integrated into the CSDP planning processes and mission structures. This will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the different mandates and work structures, foster synergies, and give CSDP access to personnel that would otherwise be difficult to recruit. On the downside, it could also intensify the competition for qualified personnel, financial resources, and competences, where mandates are overlapping. Another risk concerns the local perspective: Closer cooperation may blur the lines between the work of civilian CSDP missions in the field and institutions focused on the EU's internal security, which could jeopardize acceptance with the host government and local population. A clear-cut division of labor between different civilian EU actors and instruments operating abroad is needed to address both issues.

Beyond a general commitment to improve procedures, EU member states were not able to agree on tangible ways to speed up decision-making and planning for new missions. While they recognize the need for swifter decision-making in the Compact, they are not willing to give up competences and control. Nor did they agree targets of how quickly missions should be able to deploy after a Council decision. But in crisis management, time matters, and lengthy processes will hamper any efforts at de-escalation. Thus, to make the best use of increased responsiveness in CSDP, member states need to find practical solutions to improve decision-making. As for planning, some Compact commitments may require an adaptation of the EU's Crisis Management Procedures.

Capabilities: Towards a More Coordinated and Sustainable Approach

The most important resource for civilian missions is highly skilled personnel. In the past, missions were often understaffed or did not have the specialists needed to fulfill their mandated tasks. The Compact aims to improve the quantity and quality of personnel for civilian CSDP. EU member states agreed on several concrete targets:

- Increase the share of seconded personnel (those are the experts that member states provide to the EU for missions at their own expense) to 70 percent
- Raise the number of personnel in the Core Responsiveness Capacity – a small group of experienced civilian experts which can be deployed at very short notice to launch or strengthen a mission – from 30 to 50.
- Be able to deploy 200 civilian experts within 30 days.

Although it sounds demanding, the new target of bringing the share of seconded personnel in missions to 70 percent actually is not particularly ambitious. But it will hopefully reverse the steady downward trend since the beginning of civilian deployments. Currently, member state secondments only account for 59 percent of mission staff⁶ as compared to 86 percent ten years ago.⁷ A target of 70 percent means that the EEAS will still have to recruit 30 percent of mission staff at EU expense. Without a reasonable budget increase, the EU's ability to react to crisis developments risks to be compromised. Also, since member states find it more attractive to second personnel for operative positions, the EEAS will have to recruit a larger share of mission support personnel, which is hard to attract without offering career paths in the EU services. Thus, reaching this target can only be a first step to rethinking and improving recruitment structures and incentives for missions.

The other quantitative targets are aimed at improving civilian CSDP's responsiveness. Responsiveness – meaning swift deployment and quickly adapting missions to conflict developments – is a key challenge for crisis management. Increasing the number of personnel in the so-called Core Responsiveness Capacity to 50 is therefore very useful because they can be deployed in a matter of days. The envisaged 200 experts to be deployed within 30 days to a new mission represent the second layer of responsiveness. Both measures would enable the EU to react very quickly to crisis situations. The main question for implementation is: Which member states will supply staff for the two capacities? There is no agreed quota or process yet. During the Compact negotiations, it was mainly Germany and Sweden that pushed for quantitative targets. It would be an important signal if other member states now were also willing to contribute significant numbers of personnel and thereby make the increase of responsiveness a common effort. Otherwise, these targets could become another unfulfilled promise regarding civilian CSDP.

Increasing quantity is not enough – for the EU's effectiveness in responding to crises, quality is equally important. So far, capability development for civilian

missions remains a national competence; as a result, it is uncoordinated and fragmented. How to improve capability development for civilian CSDP was therefore a much-debated issue during the Compact process. Nevertheless, commitments in this regard remain vague: All member states merely pledged to draft National Implementation Plans (NIPs) until the fall of 2019, outlining current capability development, capability planning, and envisaged improvements, and to participate in an annual capability review at EU level based on the NIPs.

The NIPs can help EU member states bring their national stakeholders together, review their structures in line with Compact commitments, and set individual, realistic, and progressive targets. In spring, member states did agree with the EEAS on a template for the NIPs. But it still gives them a lot of leeway. They can decide on how seriously they want to engage and improve nationally, and on how much information they want to provide. It is not yet clear whether the 27 NIPs will be sufficiently compatible to allow for a comprehensive review at EU level. Moreover, member states have not said whether they will share their NIPs at EU level or keep them confidential. The latter would make the exercise largely redundant. In contrast, sharing this information with other member states would create possibilities for bi- or multilateral cooperation.

The planned civilian capability review is supposed to lead to better coordination and more sustainability: Through annual data collections and review conferences, the EEAS and member states hope to determine the status quo of civilian capabilities and plan ahead for future needs. Yet this will only work if the review is designed in a way that will make member states value the quality of information it produces instead of dreading the heavy workload involved. The review should help to regularly take stock during the multi-annual Compact process, secure achievements and update capability needs.

The first review conference is planned for the second semester of 2019 under the Finnish Council Presidency; its purpose is to stake stock after the first year of Compact implementation. But to date, no decisions have been taken on the design of the review, and no workable process design has been proposed. Member states have not agreed on the institution which will conduct the review. Nor have they decided whether there should be any consequences for lack of compliance. Yet as long as the review modus is undetermined, implementation of other commitments cannot be tracked. The big risk is that the Compact implementation process will be postponed before work on issues of substance has even started.

Many challenges remain for the EU and its member states when implementing Compact commitments concerning the strategic dimension of civilian CSDP, decision-making, and capabilities. The following synopsis

provides a brief overview of the outlined issues including the respective commitments, opportunities, and challenges they represent:

Table 1: Commitments, Opportunities, and Risks of the Civilian Compact 2018

	Issue	Commitment*	Opportunity	Risk
Strategic dimension	Missions work increasingly on internal-external nexus	Traditional core tasks reaffirmed; new tasks added	Adapt concept to incorporate changes already underway in missions	Future mandates shaped by domestic pressure
Decision-making	Static mission mandates	Flexible, scalable, modular mandates	Enable quick mission adaptations; End MS' micro-management	Opportunity remains unused as MS do not want to give up control
	EU programs lack coherence	Integrated programming	Mutually reinforcing programs and activities	Too much competition and lack of trust between EU actors
	EU actors do not share conflict analysis with each other	Strengthen shared conflict analysis – create country-specific awareness platforms	Connect EU actors in mission theaters	Need for improvement at planning and conduct level in Brussels remains neglected
	CSDP and JHA have overlapping mandates and operating areas	Strengthen cooperation with JHA actors; integrate JHA expertise in CSDP	Acquire personnel hard to get for CSDP; foster understanding and synergies	Loss of acceptance at local level; increased competition for resources and personnel
	Slow decision-making and planning	Speed up decision-making and planning	Revive QMV idea or find better decision-making mechanism	No real willingness for change
Capability dimension	Shortage of skilled civilian personnel seconded by MS	Increase share of seconded personnel to 70 %	Reverse current downward trend of secondments	30% contracted personnel at expense of EU budget
	Lack of personnel deployable at short notice (responsiveness)	Build capacities to deploy 50 personnel at short notice and 200 within 30 days	Strengthen responsiveness and speed up reaction	No quotas or processes yet – who will contribute?
	Uncoordinated and fragmented capability development among EU MS	Draft NIPs and set up an annual EU civilian capability review	Promote information exchange, coordination, shared projects; take stock regularly	Administrative exercise without added value, as MS are reluctant to share information

Source: Author's own, except *Foreign Affairs Council, 19 November 2018.

Roadmap: Building a Stronger Civilian CSDP

The Compact addresses many of the current challenges in civilian CSDP. The negotiations leading up to the Compact showed that most member states value civilian CSDP and are willing to improve the instrument. However, success cannot be taken for granted: There are challenges and risks ahead, e.g. how member states can find agreement on issues where there are no clear commitments. Also, there is a risk of losing momentum in the political process if it takes too long for even first results to materialize. In this case, member states may eventually get less interested in civilian CSDP.

In short, the year 2019 is crucial for delivering some substance on the commitments taken and for strengthening EU crisis management overall. While the deadline for full implementation of the Compact has been set for summer 2023, the following steps need to be taken over the coming months:

Until fall of 2019,

- Enable NIPs to foster national coherence and European coordination. If NIPs are shared at EU level, they could incentivize bi- or multinational cooperation on capability development. This could create synergies, reduce spending, foster the exchange of best practices and create more transparency on future capability gaps.
- Shape a feasible, informative review process quickly. The first annual capability review is scheduled for the fall of 2019. Feasible process options, which produce added value while not overburdening the actors involved, must urgently be agreed. Like CARD in the military realm, the process should encourage transparency and multinational cooperation. Once the review process is set, the focus can shift to issues of substance, such as capability development.
- Make use of new flexibility in mandates. More flexible mandates can improve mandate implementation and enhance the work of civilian missions. Member states should therefore make them a rule rather than

an exception. Starting with the next mandate extensions, they should find ways to benefit individual missions. The deployment of a pilot specialized team, as currently under discussion, could provide valuable information on how flexible mandates can be used most effectively.

- Start realizing quantitative commitments. Germany and Sweden lobbied for quantitative targets to professionalize civilian CSDP. They should now breathe life into the new capacity and pledge their share of personnel early in the process. This would show good will and hopefully motivate other member states to follow the example.

Until summer 2023,

- Implement agreed strategic priorities for mission mandates. EU member states need to stick to the agreed prioritization of Feira over the new security challenges when crafting future mandates. The focus of civilian CSDP should remain on helping host countries in SSR, civil administration and other support missions. When integrating new tasks into mandates, EU member states should question whether CSDP really is the best implementing agent and stick to a division of labor with other actors, leading to the next point:
- Clarify the relations between different EU external actors and instruments. The relations, competences and boundaries between different EU actors must be clarified before cooperation can be enhanced (in the form of a conflict management strategy or similar). This holds especially true for the work on new security challenges in third countries: As long as CSDP and JHA actors have overlapping mandates and no clear lead is attributed, competition and politically opportune decision-making will continue to impede cooperation.
- Make shared conflict analysis and integrated planning mandatory. The EEAS and Commission should develop workable suggestions for streamlining shared conflict analysis and integrated programming at every level of cooperation between EU actors. It should be the mandatory basis for decision-making about EU action in crisis areas.
- Explore range of options for swifter decision-making. High responsiveness over secondment and equipment is no gain, if the decision-making structures among

Timetable for implementation:

- **Ongoing:**
Member states draft NIPs
- **April 2019:**
Joint EEAS/ Commission Action Plan delivered, laying out steps for implementation in EU institutions and proposals for improving operational aspects of civilian CSDP
- **Fall 2019:**
Delivery of NIPs (member states) and a Civilian Annual Report on Capabilities (EEAS); First Annual Review Conference under Finnish Presidency;
- **Early summer 2023:**
Full implementation of Civilian Compact

member states continue to be rigid and slow. Therefore, EU member states must – at best supported by an honest broker – improve the decision-making process, based on a range of possible options. From Qualified Majority Voting over the idea of a European Security Council or smaller EU coalitions to support particular missions, all possible options should be analyzed for their advantages, risks, and feasibility.

- Explore incentives to increase personnel numbers. The EEAS should draw up options for supporting member states in the development of their national capabilities and incentivize them to provide more personnel. This should include possibilities to compensate member states for secondments.
- Plan capabilities more strategically. To professionalize civilian CSDP in the longer term, NIPs and reviews are not enough. A more strategic capability planning process, based on lessons learned and scenario-planning, could inform capability development early on. This would enable the EU to respond to crises swiftly and effectively instead of having to react to capability gaps in an ad hoc manner.

Carina Böttcher is Research Fellow in the Security, Defense, and Armaments program of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP).

Notes

- 1 The guiding priorities for civilian CSDP, the so-called Feira priorities (after the place of the Council meeting), were defined in 2000: police, rule of law, civilian administration, and civil protection. The latter was never implemented in missions; instead, EU member states added monitoring, support to EU Special Representatives, SSR, and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) to the civilian CSDP priorities over the following years.
- 2 Foreign Affairs Council, Council Conclusions on strengthening civilian CSDP, May 28, 2018, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35380/st09288-en18.pdf>> (accessed April 10, 2019).
- 3 The concept paper is not publicly accessible; it was disseminated to member states. It was endorsed and summarized here: Foreign Affairs Council, Council Conclusions on strengthening civilian CSDP, May 28, 2018, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35380/st09288-en18.pdf>> (accessed April 10, 2019).
- 4 Tobias Pietz, Nicht Migration, sondern Krisen managen: Wie Deutschland die zivile GSVP stärken könnte, <<https://peacelab.blog/2018/06/nicht-migration-sondern-krisen-managen-wie-deutschland-die-zivile-gsvp-staerken-koennte/>> (accessed April 10, 2019).
- 5 Specialized teams are a new concept for civilian missions introduced by the Civilian Compact. The concept has not yet been spelled out in detail, but specialized teams could bring a small teams of experts who have been trained and deployed together for specialized tasks, e.g. in the area of cyber threats. This way, specialized teams could also be used to flexibly add certain modules to a mission.
- 6 The figures were presented by a representative of the EEAS at a public session of the Subcommittee on Civilian Crisis Prevention in the German Parliament on October 15, 2018.
- 7 Daniel Korski and Richard Gowan, Can the EU Rebuild Failing States? A Review of Europe's Civilian Capabilities, October 2009, <https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/can_the_eu_rebuild_failing_states_a_review_of_europes_civilian_capacities> (accessed April 25, 2019), p. 45.

