

# Civilian Crisis Management: Assessing the Readiness of EU Member States and Institutions

by Nicoletta Pirozzi and Francesco Musi

The civilian dimension of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict stabilisation has long been prominent in EU crisis management missions. From 2000 onwards, the EU has developed its monitoring, capacity-building, strategic advice and training tools, deploying a total of 22 civilian missions beyond its borders. Currently, there are 11 active civilian missions, stretching from the Balkans (EULEX Kosovo) to the Middle East (EUBAM Rafah, EUPOL COPPS, EUAM Iraq), from Eastern Europe and Caucasus (EUAM Ukraine, EUMM Georgia) to Africa (EUBAM Libya, EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUCAP Somalia). Their main tasks include policy reforms on the rule of law, the fight against organised crime and security sector reform.

Over the past year, significant efforts have gone into developing the non-military dimension of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), increasing funds and visibility for such missions, as a result of the adoption of the so-called Civilian Compact in November 2018.<sup>1</sup> Launched within the wider framework of the 2016 EU Global Strategy,<sup>2</sup> the Civilian Compact aims to promote a comprehensive review of the civilian dimension of CSDP in order to adapt it to the new geopolitical challenges.

<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union, *Conclusions on the Establishment of a Civilian CSDP Compact* (14305/18), 19 November 2018, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14305-2018-INIT/en/pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, <https://europa.eu/!Tr66qx>.

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The Compact has widened the scope of civilian actions in order to address new challenges such as irregular migration, hybrid threats, cyber-security, terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime and support for capacity building and border management as well as maritime security. Despite the risk of distorting the original functions of civilian CSDP's missions, which may result in a reduction of stabilisation activities – most needed in countries affected by conflict and crisis – in favour of an increased focus on migration issues, the Civilian Compact has undoubtedly rekindled interest in civil crisis management among member states. Many of them are currently drafting plans for the implementation of commitments undertaken in the framework of the Compact to further develop their national contributions to civilian CSDP.<sup>3</sup>

On 15 November 2019, one year from the adoption of the Compact, all member states attended the first Annual Review Conference in Brussels, organised by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and European Commission together with the Finnish Presidency. The event aimed to take stock of progress and identify next steps for the full delivery of the Compact's objectives by 2023.

Emphasis was given to the need to ensure a more modular, scalable and flexible civilian CSDP on the ground as well as to increase the number of seconded experts in these missions. In particular, a new instrument –

<sup>3</sup> 12 member states have produced their National Implementation Plan (NIP) so far.

Specialised Teams of civilian experts – will be tested on the ground in EUAM Iraq and EUCAP Sahel Mali. In reality, the idea of specialised teams, composed of pre-identified and trained civilian experts, is not new. The creation of Civilian Response Teams (CRTs) was included already in the 2008 Civilian Headline Goal,<sup>4</sup> but their employment has been limited. In the new Civilian CSDP Compact, these teams should implement tasks related to the internal-external security nexus and be employed in modular and scalable missions, but the obstacles that impeded the full operationalisation of CRTs have yet to be overcome.

One way to measure the effectiveness of the EU's civilian crisis management tools over time is to look at the numbers. In terms of personnel deployed, in 2010, EU civilian missions involved 2,307 experts. In 2018, this number has been almost halved (1,247 units). From 2016 onwards, the trend has stabilised, with 1,200 units on average per year. Among those, "seconded" personnel (namely detached staff, remunerated directly from member states) has progressively decreased, going from 1,848 in 2010 to 717 units in 2018, or from 80 per cent to 60 per cent of total staff. "Seconded" staff is most employed in missions deployed to Libya, Kosovo, Ukraine and Georgia, but is scarcely used in all other field operations. "Contracted" staff – selected and remunerated directly by the European Union – has mostly remained stable, but given the reduction of "seconded" staff, its

<sup>4</sup> Council of the European Union, *Civilian Headline Goal 2008* (15863/04), 7 December 2004, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15863-2004-INIT/en/pdf>.

numbers went from 20 per cent to 40 per cent of total deployed staff between 2010 and 2018.

Various trends may be highlighted as having an impact on the number of personnel deployed by EU member states, helping to explain this negative trend. A first reason could relate to the evolution of the civilian missions themselves, in accordance with changing priorities of the EU's political agenda. From 2010 to 2018, the three biggest missions in terms of units deployed (EULEX Kosovo, EUMM Georgia e EUPOL Afghanistan) went through important strategic reviews and have been reduced in terms of units. In other cases, such as EUPOL Afghanistan, the mission formally ended in 2016.

The African context is different in many ways. Over the last years, the European Union directed much effort towards the Sahel region, a crossroad of migration flows, terrorism, smuggling and one of the most unstable areas of the African continent. In this region, the European Union conducted several interventions and launched two new civilian missions: EUCAP Sahel Niger (from 2012) and EUCAP Sahel Mali (from 2015). Since then, these missions witnessed significant increases in terms of personnel, demonstrating the growing EU attention towards the area.

National contributions are another important variable to take into account when talking about civilian missions. In 2010 the "Big Seven", or those countries that normally contribute civilian staff with more than 1,000 units each, were – in decreasing order

– France, Germany, Italy, Romania, Poland, Finland and Sweden. These seven countries together guaranteed 66 per cent of "seconded" personnel to EU missions. In 2018, the largest contributor was Poland, with 118 units, followed by Sweden, Germany, France and Italy.

Germany and Italy have traditionally been ranked as the top two contributors to civilian CSDP, and both have supplied "seconded" experts to the EU's eleven ongoing missions. Similar trends also relate to contracted personnel. The main area of interest of Germany is Europe. In 2018 Berlin seconded most of its personnel to EUAM Ukraine (20 experts), EULEX Kosovo (15) and EUMM Georgia (11 units).

With regards to Italy, the main areas of interest are the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Moreover, Italy holds relevant leadership positions within these missions. Among them, Vincenzo Tagliaferri currently leads EUBAM Libya and Vincenzo Coppola, lieutenant-general of the Italian Carabinieri, is the Civilian Operations Commander in charge of all EU civilian missions.

Data show an evolution in the strategy adopted by Paris: while France is still ranked among the principal contributors to civilian CSDP, the bulk of its efforts are concentrated in the Sahel region (53 of the 59 French "seconded" staff are employed in EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger). Moreover, from 2016 onwards, French "contracted" personnel deployed in EU civilian missions overtook "seconded" ones: in 2018, French "contracted" staff

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numbered 70 individuals, deployed only to the Sahel. This adds to the strong military presence of France in region, especially through the Operation Barkhane, including 4,500 military staff, in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.

In conclusion, as demonstrated by the above data, EU civilian missions have become smaller over the past decade, with less personnel supplied by member states. From East to South, the EU can still demonstrate its added value in civilian crisis management. However, in order to make these missions more effective, the *sine qua non* condition is to improve financial investments and political coordination tools from now to 2023.

The financial tools foreseen in the next EU budget cycle (2021–2027) do not seem to be the most promising response to the questions at hand. The Negotiating Box recently presented by the rotating Finnish Presidency of the EU Council has dramatically scaled back the initial proposal of the European Commission, reducing allocated funds for EU external action from 123 billion to 103 billion euro and those for security and defence from 27.5 billion to 14.6 billion euro.<sup>5</sup> The priorities outlined by the new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyden do not seem to include the enhancement of EU crisis management and its civilian component either, pointing instead

to the need for a reinforced European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) of 10,000 units by 2024. Member states must do their part, but the institutions in Brussels also need to show their readiness and goodwill to develop this crucial component of the EU's global role.

13 December 2019

<sup>5</sup> Council of the European Union, *Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027: Negotiating Box with figures* (14518/1/19 REV 1), 5 December 2019, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14518-2019-REV-1/en/pdf>.

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