



## The EU's Role in Peacebuilding

This series of Briefing Papers aims to outline the work of the European Union (EU) in the field of Peacebuilding, how it is involved in Conflict Zones and International Actors (illustrated by Case Studies). The papers are intended to act as an introduction to this topic and to help provide understanding of the EU's work in this field.

This paper is a basic introduction to the role of the EU in Peacebuilding, specifically in the prevention of violent conflicts (which is often referred to as conflict prevention).

### Why should the EU be involved in Peacebuilding?

The EU can be viewed as a peace project helping Western Europe to develop peacefully and prosperously. The EU states that “*European Countries are committed to dealing peacefully with disputes and to co-operating through common institutions*”<sup>1</sup>. The EU recognises itself as a member of the international community and a global player “*has a political and moral responsibility to act to avoid the human suffering and the destruction of resources caused by violent conflicts*”<sup>2</sup>.

### The EU Policy Framework

Important to an understanding of the EU's peacebuilding work is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

#### Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

The CFSP is the Second Pillar of the European Union (the first being the Economic and Monetary Union and the third being Justice and Home Affairs). The CFSP was established in 1993 and has been changed as the EU developed an identity as an international actor in its own right<sup>3</sup>.

Further information on the CFSP is available at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm)

#### European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)

The ESDP is part of the CFSP and is an ongoing project of the EU and there have been long-standing ambitions in the EU to create a common security and defence policy (see the chronology provided by the Commission at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/esdp/chrono.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/esdp/chrono.htm)). The stated goal “*is to complete and thus strengthen the European Union's external ability to act through the development of civilian and military capabilities for international conflict prevention and crisis management*”.

Further information on the ESDP is available at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/esdp/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/esdp/index.htm)

<sup>1</sup> *A Secure Europe in a Better World - European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003,

[http://ue.eu.int/cms3\\_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g](http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g)

<sup>2</sup> *EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts*, 2001,

<http://www.eu2001.se/static/eng/pdf/violent.PDF>

<sup>3</sup> “*Conflict Indicators Developed by the Commission - the checklist for root causes of conflict/early warning indicators*” by Javier Niño Pérez in “*The European Union and Conflict Prevention: Policy and Legal Aspect*” edited by Vincent Kronenberger, Jan Wouters. Cambridge University Press, December 2004 p.6

Two key documents provided a framework for the EU's work in the field of Peacebuilding; *'The EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts'* and the *'European Security Strategy'*.

### The EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts

<http://www.eu2001.se/static/eng/pdf/violent.PDF>

Endorsed by the European Council in 2001 the programme outlines how the EU aims to:

- set clear political priorities for preventive actions
- ensure early warning, action and policy coherence
- strengthen EU instruments for long-term and short-term prevention
- increase co-operation and build effective partnerships

The programme also recognises the key role of the United Nations (UN) in preventing violent conflict and that *"EU actions will be undertaken in accordance with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter"*.

### A Secure Europe in a Better World - European Security Strategy

[http://ue.eu.int/cms3\\_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g](http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g)

More recently the EU produced the European Security Strategy in 2003. The Strategy identifies the global and key threats from the perspective of the EU countries. Along with outlining the threats of Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) it identifies the need to address the challenges of regional conflict and failed states. The Strategy recognises the need to act before crises occur stating: *"Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early"*. It also recognises that the threats in today's world are not purely military and cannot be dealt with using only a military approach.

### EU Instruments for Conflict Prevention

In terms of preventing a conflict situation (be it a conflict between states, within a region or internal to a state) to escalate or revert to a state of violence, the EU has a number of instruments at its disposal. The EU has a number of long-term and short-term instruments<sup>4</sup> it can use to contribute to conflict prevention.

### Effective Early Warning: The European Commission Checklist for Root Causes of Conflict<sup>5</sup>

For there to be a timely response to a developing conflict situation there needs to be an effective early warning system in place.

In relation to ensuring early warning of violent conflicts as stated in the *'EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts'* the Commission has developed a checklist of root causes of conflict in countries/regions. These act as early warning indicators designed to increase awareness within EU decision making of potential conflicts.

The following table lists the early warning indicators and what questions are asked to assess the country:

Early warning Indicator	Questions asked
1) Legitimacy of the State	- Are there proper checks and balances in the political

<sup>4</sup> This section based on *"EU Instruments for Conflict Prevention"* by Javier Niño Pérez in *"The European Union and Conflict Prevention: Policy and Legal Aspect"* edited by Vincent Kronenberger, Jan Wouters. Cambridge University Press, December 2004

	<p>system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How inclusive is the political/administrative power?</li> <li>- What is the overall level of respect for national authorities?</li> <li>- Is corruption widespread?</li> </ul>
2) Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How strong is the judicial system?</li> <li>- Does unlawful state violence exist?</li> <li>- Does civilian power control security forces?</li> <li>- Does organised crime undermine the country's stability?</li> </ul>
3) Respect for fundamental rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are civil and political freedoms respected?</li> <li>- Are religious and cultural rights respected?</li> <li>- Are other basic human rights respected?</li> </ul>
4) Civil society and media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can civil society operate freely and efficiently?</li> <li>- How independent and professional are the media?</li> </ul>
5) Relations between communities and dispute-solving mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How good are relations between identity groups?</li> <li>- Does the state arbitrate over tensions and disputes between communities?</li> <li>- Are there uncontrolled flows of migrants/refugees?</li> </ul>
6) Sound economic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How robust is the economy?</li> <li>- Is policy framework conducive to macro-economic stability?</li> <li>- How sustainable is the state's environmental policy?</li> </ul>
7) Social and regional inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How are social welfare policies addressed?</li> <li>- How are social inequalities tackled?</li> <li>- How are regional disparities tackled?</li> </ul>
8) Geopolitical situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How stable is the region's geopolitical situation?</li> <li>- Is the state affected by external threats?</li> <li>- Is the state affecting regional stability?</li> </ul>

Countries are scored on these criteria and those receiving the highest scores are brought to the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers at the Council of the European Union (the General Affairs & External Relations Council, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/gac/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/gac/)).

Further Information on the Checklist is available at:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/cp/list.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cp/list.htm)

### Long-term instruments

Among the EU instruments in this area we can identify “development cooperation, trade, human rights, democratisation, environment policies, electoral observation and arms control. As observed in the Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention (11 April 2001) “*Development policy and co-operation programmes provide the most powerful instruments at the Community's disposal for treating the root causes of conflict*”.

### Short-term instruments

Short-term instruments or ‘Crisis Management’ are needed if long-term conflict prevention measures have failed or not been undertaken.

The EU has also been developing civilian and military crisis management capabilities under the CFSP and ESDP. One criticism in this area that has been levelled at the EU is that it “*continues to invest more time and money developing its military crisis capabilities than developing its civilian capabilities, despite the essential role civilians play in all stages of conflict prevention*”<sup>6</sup>. Further information on Civilian Crisis Management is available at:

<sup>6</sup> *Generating Civilian Capabilities: Moving beyond Crisis Management to Peacebuilding* - EPLO Policy Paper, (March 2005), <http://www.eplo.org/documents/CivilianCapabilitiesPolicyPaper.doc>

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/cm.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cm.htm). Also see the article in *Around Europe*, QCEA's Newsletter on "Civilian Crisis Management: What is it and what is still to be done?"<sup>7</sup>

Another recent EU crisis management instrument is the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) "*designed to allow the Community to respond urgently to the needs of countries threatened with or undergoing severe political instability or suffering from the effects of a technological or natural disaster*"<sup>8</sup>. Further information on the RRM is available at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/rrm/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/rrm/index.htm)

## **Enhancing EU Impact on Conflict Prevention**

The EU still has significant work to do in order to be effective in Conflict Prevention. As part of their Joint EU Initiative to enhance the European Union's impact on preventing violent conflict, International Alert and Saferworld, two Non-Governmental Organisations, produce an annual paper on "*Enhancing EU Impact on Conflict Prevention*".

The 2004 paper "*Strengthening Global Security Through Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict*", produced in association with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), outlines 4 key areas that need to be addressed to enhance the EU's capacity to prevent violent conflict.

## **Link Crisis Management with Conflict Prevention**

The EU's significant progress in short-term Crisis Management is unsustainable if it is not linked to a long-term conflict prevention approach. The report recommends that greater co-ordination occurs between the Council and Commission as well as between the EU and other actors involved in a conflict, and that a European Peacebuilding, Research and Civilian Capabilities Agency is established to ensure greater coherence in this area.

## **Address the Root Causes of Violent Conflict**

Conflict Prevention reduces the human and economic cost of war. There is a link between poverty and conflict, it is a reality that most wars are fought in poor countries and have extreme inequalities of wealth and opportunity. The report notes that while the EU has begun to mainstream conflict prevention in development policies it still needs to address it in several areas including the impact of trade policies and the role of the private sector in conflict situations.

## **Tackle Weapons Transfers and Organised Crime**

The proliferation of weapons is a major threat to securing peace and development. The EU has an obligation to develop effective arms controls as many of its Member States are large arms exporters. Among the recommendations given by the report is strengthening controls on legal arms exports and reducing demand for small arms in conflict regions.

## **Engage Civil Society in the Prevention of Violent Conflict**

Recognising the important roles that Civil Society organisations have in advancing the peaceful resolution of violent conflict, the report notes that through its various budget lines the EU could play a larger role in supporting civil society engagement in conflict prevention policies and programmes.

A recent development of note in this area is the Conflict Prevention Partnership established by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the International Crisis Group, International Alert and the European Policy Centre and is funded by the EU. The goal of the Conflict Prevention Partnership is to improve the capacity of the European Union for conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding.

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<sup>7</sup> Available online at: <http://www.quaker.org/qcea/aroundeurope/2005/272.htm#Fifth>

<sup>8</sup> Conflict Prevention and Civilian Crisis Management - Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) - Overview, March 2005, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/cpcm/rrm/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/rrm/index.htm)

The Partnership aims to achieve this by providing EU and national policy-makers with timely, focused information and analysis, as well as practical policy recommendations, through the publication and discussion of a series of studies on conflict-related issues in areas around the world of particular interest to the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament. Further information on the Partnership is available from its website at: <http://www.conflictprevention.net>

Full details of these recommendations are available in the report: [www.saferworld.org.uk/publications/EU\\_presidency\\_04\\_irish\\_dutch.pdf](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications/EU_presidency_04_irish_dutch.pdf)