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Citation for published version (APA):

Dijkstra, H. (2018). *Beyond the Civilian Compact: Why we need to talk about civilian capabilities*. Istituto Affari Internazionali. EU Global Strategy Watch No. 2

Document status and date:

Published: 01/12/2018

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Document license:

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Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
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- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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Beyond the Civilian Compact: Why we need to talk about civilian capabilities

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Abstract

This contribution points at the importance of developing the relevant capabilities for the Civilian Compact. It notes that the Civilian Compact – a milestone document in the implementation of the EU Global Strategy – marks a notable shift in the scope and ambition of EU civilian crisis response. At the same time, the experience of the last few years shows that the EU has faced significant shortfalls in capabilities and vacancy rates. For the EU to match the scope and ambition of the Civilian Compact with capabilities requires a considerable investment by the member states and the EU institutions. This needs to go beyond the recently revised Civilian Capability Development Plan.

The civilian component of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has had a difficult decade. It has been mostly downhill since 2008, the year that saw the launch of ambitious missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Georgia. Despite the continuous flurry of activity in Brussels and some new missions in the Sahel region, civilian CSDP has essentially been on a long lunch break since the early-2000s.

The EU Global Strategy of June 2016 has provided an important “reset” for European foreign policy and crisis management in particular. It has created the momentum for a stronger CSDP as part of a broader Integrated Approach. A significant part of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy over the past two years has focused on the civilian aspects of the CSDP. Indeed, in the spring of 2018, the High Representative presented a concept paper on civilian CSDP. This was followed by a new Civilian Capability Development Plan in September 2018. And all of this was brought together in the Civilian Compact adopted in November 2018.¹

The Civilian Compact provides a once-in-a-decade opportunity to put civilian CSDP back on track. While it mainly serves as a political declaration, it signals a renewed commitment of the member states. It also launches a review process to ensure commitments of the member states in the future. The EU has engaged in civilian CSDP missions since 2003, so it is high time that the member states start considering it as a permanent activity of the Union; and that they make the appropriate capabilities available.

The Civilian Compact marks a notable shift in scope and ambition. There will be a stronger focus on the internal–external security nexus and the ambition is to do (much) more when it comes to civilian CSDP. The big question is, however, whether the Civilian Compact will deliver. This requires, first and foremost, a more significant investment in civilian capabilities by the member states. The EU already has trouble filling its missions with personnel. And further shortages loom on the horizon, particularly in new policy fields such as migration, maritime security, counter-terrorism, organised crime and cyber security. For the EU to match the scope and ambition of the Civilian Compact with adequate capabilities requires a considerable investment by the member states and the EU institutions.

Civilian CSDP anno 2018...

As a starting point it is important to consider the state-of-the-art. The good news is that at the EU-level, considerable improvements have been made in the last couple of years. One key example is the new budget line “emergency measures” in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) budget of tens of millions of euros. The reality of the EU budget is that as a result of the multiannual budgetary cycle, it is difficult to make funding available at short notice for rapid crisis response. The launch of the civilian CSDP mission in Ukraine in 2014 was, for example, “possible only because of the transfer of funds from other budget headings”.² The budget line “emergency measures” addresses

1 Council conclusions, *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*, 19 November 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37027/st14305-en18.pdf>

2 High Representative, *Contribution to the June 2015 European Council*, 2015, p. 9, http://eeas.europa.eu/csdp/documents/pdf/report-ahead_european-defenceagency.pdf



this problem. It is a major step forward from, for instance, the Aceh Monitoring Mission in 2005 which was partially financed through ad hoc financial contributions by non-EU members.³

On the procurement side, an important innovation is the establishment of Warehouse 2.0.⁴ This project is implemented by a contracted partner in Sweden which provides all civilian CSDP missions with much of their equipment. This not only provides for more rapid response, because the equipment is directly available, but also relieves EU officials of their regular procurement headaches. In particular during a mission start-up phase, mission staff previously had to procure much of the equipment themselves. This resulted in EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) staff scouting much of central and eastern Europe for second-hand vehicles to be deployed in Kosovo.⁵ The procurement challenges for the Afghanistan mission were even more severe. Warehouse 2.0 is therefore a major development.

The EU has also done a lot in terms of mission support. After a long debate, going back at least to the early 2010s, the EU now has a Mission Support Platform located in the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC).⁶ This means that it permanently has relevant expertise available on logistics, information technology and procurement. It makes much sense to centralize those functions in Brussels rather than have them in each of the missions. The recent decision to develop a Core Responsiveness Capacity is also a major step in the right direction.⁷ Having pre-identified staff capacity available for mission start-up significantly increases rapid-response capabilities. In addition, it strengthens the Mission Support Platform, which hosts this new capacity.

While these are important developments at the EU level, the main challenge for civilian CSDP remains the quantity and quality of personnel seconded by the member states. For instance, while the Operation Plans (OPLANs) for civilian CSDP missions mandated 1,173 seconded personnel in 2016, only 885 positions were filled.⁸ There were similar shortfalls in the contracted and local staff categories. Not surprisingly, the most difficult jobs to fill are those with a specialized profile. It is particularly hard to find a qualified judge for Kosovo. It was also not straightforward to get aviation security experts for the Juba airport mission in South Sudan. What can also be challenging is to have appropriate contracted staff for the specialised support functions (logistics, procurement, etc.). Against this background of staff shortages, it is worthwhile discussing the ambitions of the Civilian Compact.

3 Pierre-Antoine Braud & Giovanni Grevi, *The EU mission in Aceh: implementing peace* (Vol. 61), 2005, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies.

4 European External Action Service, *Equipping Our Deployed Experts - A Warehouse For The Civilian CSDP Missions*, 1 June 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/45729/equipping-our-deployed-experts-warehouse-civilian-csdp-missions_ky

5 Hylke Dijkstra, 'The planning and implementation of the rule of law mission of the European Union in Kosovo', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 5(2), 2011, p. 204

6 Hylke Dijkstra, Petar Petrov & Ewa Mahr, 'Reacting to Conflict: Civilian Capabilities in the EU, UN and OSCE', *EU-CIVCAP Report DL4.1*, 2016, <https://eu-civcap.net/portfolio/deliverables/>

7 Council conclusions, *Council conclusions on security and defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy*, 13 November 2017, paragraph 15, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31520/ccs-on-security-and-defence.pdf>

8 Tommaso De Zan, Paola Tessari & Bernardo Venturi, 'Procedures, Personnel and Technologies for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: An Assessment of EU Member States' Capabilities', *EU-CIVCAP Report DL2.1*, Annex I, 2016,

https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/eu-civcap_deliverable_2-1_updated.pdf

Which capabilities for the Civilian Compact?

Before moving on to the required civilian capabilities of the Civilian Compact, it is worth taking a step back and considering the original capability targets for civilian CSDP. The Council conclusions of Feira of June 2000 are an important benchmark here.⁹ Essentially EU leaders made an inventory of ongoing European civilian deployments at the time (in the UN, WEU, OSCE, etc.) and stated that the EU should have similar civilian capabilities. This included no less than 5,000 police officers and 1,000 police for rapid deployment. Feira was, however, not just about ambition but also provided a wide policy scope for civilian CSDP with its four priorities (police, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection).

As noted above, civilian CSDP anno 2018 is very far from these targets. The EU currently has difficulty to even second 800 experts of whom only a few hundred are police. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the scope of civilian CSDP has become very narrow. The EU currently does mostly capacity building and security sector reform (SSR). There are some executive functions in Kosovo and there is a monitoring role in Georgia, but these remain exceptions.

The Civilian Compact has the potential to address both the scope and ambition of civilian CSDP, but this needs to be complemented with the necessary capabilities. As regards the scope of civilian CSDP, the integrated approach of the EU Global Strategy seems to be making headway. There is much talk about the internal–external security nexus and this also features in the Civilian Compact. Indeed, the Civilian Compact identifies additional priorities for civilian CSDP, including “those linked to irregular migration, hybrid threats, cyber security, terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, border management and maritime security, as well as preventing and countering violent extremism, also taking into account the need to preserve and protect cultural heritage”.¹⁰ In terms of ambition, the EU also wants to move forward with rapid response and again executive missions, in addition to existing capacity-building and SSR.¹¹

The implication is that the EU member states should not just do a better job at addressing current vacancies and personnel shortfalls, but that they should also be prepared to take an additional step in the implementation of the Civilian Compact. This is not just about “doing more” (increased ambition), but also considering the specific needs of civilian CSDP within a broader integrated approach. To make it very concrete: which member state currently has cyber security teams ready that can be deployed to partner countries (under the CSDP flag)? Which member states are willing to provide

9 *Conclusions of the Presidency, Santa Maria da Feira European Council (Annexes)*, 19 and 20 June 2000, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei2_en.htm

10 Council conclusions, *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*, 19 November 2018, p. 4 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37027/st14305-en18.pdf>

11 Council conclusions, *Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence*, Annex to the Annex, 14 November 2016, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22459/eugs-conclusions-st14149en16.pdf>. Council conclusions, *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*, 19 November 2018, p. 4, paragraph 8, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37027/st14305-en18.pdf>



maritime security experts or migration experts on CSDP missions? And, importantly, when will EU civilian crisis management structures start hiring staff with the required expertise to provide guidance from Brussels for missions?

When thinking about the newly required expertise, it is also worth thinking about the recruitment model for personnel. Currently, civilian experts are recruited on an individual basis. While the Civilian Compact recognizes the potential of experts to be deployed in small teams, the question is which member states will develop such teams? Also, much of the new expertise is rather specialised in nature. This is likely to imply more contracted staff as opposed to seconded staff, which runs against the 70% target of seconded staff mentioned in the Civilian Compact. Will the CFSP budget be increased for this purpose? Furthermore, what really is the capabilities allocation along the internal–external nexus? In his 2018 State of the Union, President Juncker called for a standing corps of 10,000 operational staff by 2020 for the European Board and Coast Guard.¹² These will be fully EU-funded, as opposed to the seconded experts in civilian CSDP. While this could be a potential model for civilian CSDP as well (funding permitting), in the short term it will more likely undermine resources and capabilities in civilian CSDP.

Conclusion

The Civilian Compact is an important milestone for civilian CSDP. It builds on the momentum of the EU Global Strategy and it comes on top of a number of recent capabilities developments in civilian CSDP. While on a strategic level, the innovations of the Civilian Compact – such as those connected to the update of civilian CSDP in line with the Integrated Approach – are laudable, they do raise a number of vital operational questions concerning capabilities. It is therefore critical that member states do not just support the Civilian Compact, but also actually start working on its implementation.

¹² European Commission, *State of the Union 2018 – Commission proposes last elements needed for compromise on migration and border reform*, 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-5712_en.htm

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