PISM POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

NO. 191 (1621), 17 SEPTEMBER 2020 © PISM

BULLETIN

Opening of the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management

Aleksandra Kozioł

The launch of the European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management (CoE) in Berlin is one of the goals of the German presidency of the EU Council. The new unit is to support the states and external services of the EU, increasing the effectiveness of the civilian dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The lack of involvement of all Member States in the creation of the CoE, however, raises concerns about the effectiveness of cooperation and proper coordination with the activities of Union bodies. Poland's participation in the CoE contributes to strengthening the potential of EU civilian missions.

Growing instability in the EU's neighbourhood and the transnational nature of the threats have resumed the debate on increasing the Union's crisis-response capacity. Part of the response to the security challenges were contained in the "Conclusions on the implementation of the Civilian CSDP Compact", adopted in November 2018 by the Council. Member States have identified as a key objective the enhancement of the EU's capacity to conduct civilian crisis-management missions. It is defined by 22 political obligations, expected to be implemented by mid-2023, but so far it has been slow. The official opening of the CoE, planned for 17 September, is part of the fulfilment of the adopted assumptions.

EU Crisis-Management Missions. An important contribution of the EU to improving security in its neighbourhood is its involvement in civilian missions. Within their framework, a wide range of tasks may be carried out, consisting of supporting the internal security sector and civil administration, as well as building the rule of law in situations of instability or conflict. Currently, the EU has 11 civilian missions in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East (see table), with a staff of around 2,000 people.

The missions are financed from the broader Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) part of the EU budget (about €281 million annually) and are supervised by the European External Action Service (EEAS). Within its framework there is the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, responsible for direct management and acting as the headquarters. The undertaking of a new mission requires a mandate granted by the Member States by unanimous vote in the Council.

The Role of the New Centre. According to Germany's intention, the CoE will create a framework to increase the level of expert analysis in the civilian dimension of the CSDP. By collecting and sharing information, the centre will help fill the gap in the standardisation of tasks and procedures related to crisis-management missions. It will thus support the states and the EEAS in meeting their commitments. The four main areas of the CoE's work can include developing best practices on civilian capability development, defining training requirements and programmes, developing standard operating procedures, and developing concepts to improve mission implementation (including the establishment of specialised teams).

The CoE will function outside Union structures and has the legal form of an association registered in Germany. Although participation in its work is open to all EU and NATO members, so far 18 countries have joined it. The founding act on 25 February was signed by 14 countries: Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Sweden. On 9 July, four more joined: Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, and Romania. Moreover, the status of preferred partner has been granted to the EU and NATO,

which will be able to participate in the work of the CoE, but without the right to vote.

Germany is fundamentally important to the functioning of the new centre in Berlin. First of all, it will cover the administrative costs and has been granted the right to unilaterally withdraw from the CoE, which will result in its dissolution (or, it may be decided by all members). States pay a membership fee of €20,000 per year. They also are responsible for delegating experts for a period not longer than two years. Each member may submit suggestions for topics to the work programme. Decisions will be taken by a qualified majority of three-fourths of votes, but in accepting new countries, setting the rules of the centre, or the budget, unanimity is required.

CoE and Civilian CSDP Challenges. The German proposal to establish the CoE to strengthen the civilian dimension of crisis response is an element of balancing the French concept of strategic autonomy, focused mainly on deepening military cooperation in Europe. Different perceptions of threats by states result in difficulties in shaping security policy at the EU level. The consequence is a lack of uniform criteria for interventions outside the EU. This translates into a continuous decline in interest in civilian missions by states in recent years, expressed in part by the overall reduction in the share of staff (by as much as a third), as well as by the shift in employment from delegated to contracted positions.

The weakest point of the civilian dimension of CSDP is the formation and quick delegation of specialised groups to missions because of a lack of unified procedures and common standards of staff training, as well as insufficient connection of a posting with the professional career path in the country after the end of the mission. In this context, the proposal to establish the CoE constitutes a significant contribution of Germany to the implementation of the Compact. The new centre has the chance to become a platform for harmonising activities. First of all, it will support states in using the extensive resources of their justice and home affairs systems (i.e., police, border guards, customs, prosecutors, courts). It also will act as a contact point between states as well as states and EU bodies (represented by the EEAS). Moreover, the CoE, thanks to the possibility of free selection of tasks to be performed by states and the rotating delegation of experts, has the chance to provide the activities of its members with needed flexibility.

The possibility of the participation of third countries such as the UK or NATO allies will also play a role in increasing the effectiveness of actions in the civilian security dimension. However, the nature of the CoE as a voluntary association has limitations. First, not all EU countries are involved in its work so far. The materials produced will therefore have an advisory role for CoE members and the EEAS. Work on the implementation of the Compact depends meanwhile on all EU countries, and to a lesser extent also on the EEAS. As the current status of meeting the provisions of the agreement shows relatively little progress, an important task of the CoE will be activities promoting the benefits of cooperation.

Conclusions. The launch of the CoE is a step towards enhancing the EU's capabilities for civilian crisis-management missions by improving the functioning of the civilian dimension of the CSDP. However, the centre's potential will depend on the funds allocated and the number of delegated experts to support Member States in sharing experiences and standardising procedures. Next year, when the CoE becomes fully operational, will be the key time for the further development of cooperation.

Meanwhile, the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic will further increase instability in the EU's neighbourhood, along with the need for peace initiatives. The practice so far shows that civilian missions are highly effective in the long term; however, their implementation requires resources that are provided directly by the Member States, which may show a low level of interest in taking new actions given the serious effects of the pandemic on their own economies and health systems. In this context, behind the German proposal to establish the CoE stands support for EU countries and bodies by formulating guidelines for capacity planning that will help to make better use of existing resources.

Poland's participation in the CoE will enable closer cooperation with other members, and also increase its role in shaping the civilian dimension of the EU's CSDP. In addition, it will positively affect the implementation of the Compact, contributing to an increase in the interoperability of justice and home affairs services at the national level. From the point of view of Polish policy, civilian missions in the Eastern Neighbourhood (Georgia, Ukraine) remain important, and their effectiveness depends on the EU's crisis-response capacity.

Table. Civilian Missions Run by the EEAS

Type of mission	Territory	Year of launch
Police (EUPOL)	Palestine	2006
Border-control support (EUBAM)	Rafah (Palestine)	2005
	Libya	2013
Observatory (EUMM)	Georgia	2008
Security-sector reform (EUAM, EUCAP)	Niger	2012
	Somalia	2012
	Mali	2015
	Ukraine	2015
	Iraq	2017
	Central African Republic	2019
Rule-of-law reform (EULEX)	Kosovo	2008

Editors: Sławomir Dębski, Patrycja Sasnal, Rafał Tarnogórski, Sebastian Płóciennik, Justyna Szczudlik, Daniel Szeligowski,
Jolanta Szymańska, Marcin Terlikowski, Karol Wasilewski, Szymon Zaręba, Tomasz Żornaczuk