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JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

EU conflict Early Warning System: Objectives, Process and Guidance for Implementation - 2020

Contents

Context

Article 21(2)(c) of the Treaty on European Union explicitly names conflict prevention as one of the EU's foreign policy goals. The 2011 Council conclusions on Conflict Prevention[1] underlined the EU's mandate to engage in this field[2] and the need to strengthen the EU's conflict early warning capability. The Council called for inputs from Member States and field-based actors, notably EU Delegations and civil society organisations, to be integrated more effectively into conflict risk analysis. It also noted that enhanced conflict early warning should enable the EU to work more closely with partners on Responsibility to Protect (R2P)[3] and the protection of human rights. Finally, the Council emphasised the need for early action to mitigate the risks of outbreak and recurrence of conflicts.

In the follow-up to these conclusions, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and European Commission put in place the **EU conflict Early Warning System** (**EU conflict EWS**). The procedures and methodology of the system were tested in two regional pilot exercises in 2012 and 2013, before a full rollout in September 2014 for all non-EU countries. Since then, yearly iterations have turned the EU conflict EWS into an important pillar of the EU conflict prevention architecture.

The previous Joint Staff Working Document[4], which defined the EU conflict EWS objectives, scope, components and relevant stakeholders, was a deliverable of the 2015 Action Plan for the Comprehensive Approach[5]. As spelt out in the EU Global Strategy (EUGS 2016)[6], and confirmed by the 2019 EUGS report[7], the Integrated Approach to conflicts and crises now lies at the centre of EU foreign policy. It calls for the EU to adopt a multi-dimensional strategy that employs all EU external policy tools and instruments for preventing violent conflict; early warning is the first step in that process. The European Consensus on Development[8] and the Joint Communication on 'A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action'[9] also highlight the importance of early warning and early action to prevent conflict and promote peace, resilience and human security.

This document further fine-tunes the system by integrating practical improvements to the EU conflict EWS. These changes result from systematic 'lessons learned' exercises and broad consultations with EEAS and Commission, as well as Member States[10], further helping to bridge the gap between early warning and early action. **The main revision prolongs the follow-up and monitoring period to two and a half years to ensure more sustained engagement on the priority countries**, and to help track the implementation of recommendations and actions proposed in the Conflict Prevention Report (CPR). A new component will be **a follow-up mission to the country concerned**, to revisit initial findings, deepen parts of the analysis and monitor the status and initial impact of the proposed preventive actions.

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[1] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/122911.pdf

[2] Doc 11820/11

[3] https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml

[4] SWD (2017) 282 final

[5] SWD (2015) 85, 10.4.2015

[6] http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union

[7] https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_global_strategy_2019.pdf. The report points to the Integrated Approach as a long-term investment: '*Looking ahead, the EU can put ever more emphasis on conflict prevention as well as long term peacebuilding, and increasingly work in an integrated manner with Member States on the ground, as well as with all relevant international, regional, state and non-state actors in any particular conflict setting*.'

[8] Doc 9459/17

[9] SWD(2017) 226, 227 final

[10] The EEAS carries out a yearly 'lessons learned' exercise after the in-country shared assessment missions. Consultations include the inter-service Conflict Prevention Leads Persons network, the informal Member States Early Warning Early Action Forum, and discussions in the Council's Political and Security Committee.

In addition, the revised JSWD aims to achieve more ambitious and integrated responses to identified risks by giving a stronger role to senior managers in the EEAS and the Commission, as they will provide guidance on the orientation and level of ambition of the CPRs.

Objectives and scope of the EU conflict Early Warning System

The EU conflict EWS is an evidence-based risk management tool that **identifies, prioritises and assesses situations at risk of violent conflict**[11] in non-EU countries, focusing on structural risk factors with a time horizon of up to four years. The EU conflict EWS seeks to identify **conflict prevention and peace building opportunities** through joint, shared analysis and to develop timely, relevant, coherent and conflict-sensitive responses to prevent the emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violence.

The EU conflict EWS is unique in its initial reliance on **quantitative data and in its scientific and systematic approach**, providing an evidence-based starting point for a shared conflict risk assessment. The entry point of the system is the Global Conflict Risk Index (GCRI)[12], which forecasts the probability and intensity of violent conflict using structural indicators related to fragility and violent conflict.

The EU conflict EWS **is not a prediction tool**, as it is always difficult to pinpoint the exact triggers for violence. There are, however, certain structural factors and indicators frequently associated with an increased conflict risk that the EU conflict EWS can help identify and mitigate. The EU conflict EWS assessment methodology facilitates EU-wide discussion of those risks and of integrated actions to mitigate them. The focus is on multiplying the preventive and peacebuilding impact of EU engagement, as well as its conflict sensitivity.

The EU conflict EWS also seeks active cooperation with other early warning processes developed by Commission DGs, *inter alia* INFORM and the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint. Furthermore, the EU conflict EWS allows the EU to make timely, robust and evidence-based contributions, and suggestions for remedial actions and conflict-sensitive approaches, to discussions on conflict prevention and resolution at **relevant international fora**, particularly at the UN[13]. It also prepares the ground for more efficient cooperation between the EU and its partner organisations such as the World Bank, the African Union, the OSCE, NATO, the League of Arab States, ECOWAS, ASEAN and MERCOSUR.

[11] Violent conflict refers to those conflicts resulting in violence occurring within, between and across state boundaries and including violence targeting particular groups, such as mass atrocities. Situations 'at risk of conflict' are understood as situations where the actions of any of the conflict parties threaten, or hold out the prospect of threatening, the security of a population or particular groups, and/or the fulfilment of core state functions, and/or the international order. The EWS does not assess the risk of inter-state conflict.

[12] The GCRI is developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre for the EU conflict EWS and is currently funded by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). A derivate of the GCRI is also used for the EU's Index for Risk Management (INFORM, which helps to improve the evidence base for financial decisions and policymaking in humanitarian aid and civil protection, measuring the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters, including human-induced hazard.

[13] For instance, the UN Peace Building Commission, the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council.

Components of the EU conflict EWS

The EU conflict EWS process provides a yearly global risk scanning and ranking, ensuring a regular update of priority situations for further scrutiny. To ensure sustained engagement and monitoring, **priority countries are followed up for two and a half years** after the initial engagement.

The essential elements of the EU conflict EWS are **risk scanning**, **prioritisation**, **shared assessment, and follow-up** and **monitoring**[14].

Preparatory component: risk scanning

The preparatory component aims to **compile all available risk information** into a single document, which serves as the basis for subsequent prioritisation and conflict risk assessment.

The main resource is a quantitative index of conflict risk (the Global Conflict Risk Index – GCRI). To model the probability and intensity of violent conflict over a period of up to four years, the GCRI uses structural indicators based on human security dimensions, which show a strong correlation with violent conflict (see Annex III). The GCRI is regularly updated to improve its coverage of relevant structural risks as new data becomes available.

As a structural conflict risk model, the GCRI does not cover recent events or conflict triggers. Findings from the index are therefore complemented with intelligence-based analysis from the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) and the latest qualitative situation analysis from open sources and internal assessments across the EEAS and the Commission, including EU Delegations.

The resulting global overview of conflict risk, compiled in **Regional Risk Tables** (RRTs), forms the

Main stakeholders: EEAS (Directorate for the Integrated Approach for Security and Peace (ISP.D); EU Intelligence and Situation Centre; EU Military Staff Intelligence Directorate (SIAC)) ♦ European Commission

starting point for prioritisation (Component 1).

1. Prioritisation

Prioritisation allows the EU and Member States to **focus resources and political action where the prospects for effective violence prevention are the strongest**, also considering the EU's strategic interests.

Therefore, when **identifying early warning priorities**, senior managers in the EEAS and the Commission focus on countries where there is a significant risk of conflict, and where opportunities for preventive action exist. Prioritisation also takes into account EU interests and EU leverage. Senior managers further assess the scope to review, enhance or expand EU engagement to support conflict prevention, conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding and strengthen resilience. This also covers situations where EU engagement would complement efforts already undertaken (or not) by partners and other regional and international organisations.

[14] See Annex I for a detailed timeline of the full cycle.

The results are shared with Member States for discussion and input in the Political and Security

Main stakeholders: Management and staff in the EEAS and the Commission ♦ Political and Security Committee

Committee (PSC), thereby concluding the prioritisation phase.

2. Shared assessment and follow-up

The shared assessment and follow-up phase brings together the wider country teams (geographic and thematic experts both in-country and at headquarters). The aim is to **identify coherent options for preventive, conflict-sensitive action, based on a joint assessment of conflict risks and dynamics**.

Following the prioritisation phase and discussion in the PSC, the Delegations and other relevant players in the EEAS and the Commission, agree on a **tailor-made timeline** for the rest of the process for each priority country. A mapping of existing analyses and EEAS, Commission and Member States activities ensures the EU conflict EWS will enhance complementarity and synergies with existing or planned engagements[15]. This timeline and, where available, the mapping exercise are presented to the relevant Council Working Groups or the PSC.

The EEAS and relevant Commission DGs deploy an inter-service mission to the priority countries to support EU Delegations in carrying out the **Assessment of Structural Risks of Conflict**. All EU actors in-country are consulted, including EU Delegations, Commission DG ECHO field offices, EUSR teams, CSDP missions and Member States' representatives, to achieve a collective assessment. If appropriate, exchanges are also organised with some of the EU's main partners on the ground, including regional and international organisations.

This analysis takes place through discussions among EU actors, structured around a series of key factors linked to human security. These factors cover 10 risk areas: Legitimacy; Rule of Law; Security; Inter-Group Relations; Human Rights; Civil Society & Media; Society; Climate Change, Environment & Disasters; Economic Performance, and Regional Stability.

During this process, EU actors also take stock of existing and planned interventions and their impact on conflict risk factors. Such interventions include preventive or peacebuilding actions, as well as actions with other goals (e.g. developmental, security, migration, political) with a conflict-sensitive focus. Where there is a need to complement ongoing activities to address an identified risk, EEAS and Commission DGs will develop proposals for additional actions, targeting the structural factors identified as significant risks in the joint, shared analysis. In the spirit of the Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises, these actions should concern the full range of the EU's external action tools, as well as measures proposed by the Member States.

As a next step, a **Conflict Prevention Report** is prepared for each priority country, outlining key risks as well as options and recommendations for preventive and conflict-sensitive engagements across EU external action domains. The purpose of the CPR is to explicitly link the analysis undertaken and the

[15] Different mechanisms with a conflict early warning or risk management component also exist within other services, such as tools related to crisis management (e.g. situation room) or EU threat assessment (intelligence based). The Risk Management Framework also assesses conflict risk for the purpose of decision making on EU financial assistance. The EU conflict EWS integrates findings from these sources where possible.

options for responses, and specify clear timelines for action. Staff from thematic and specialised units subsequently discuss the assessment and proposals contained in these reports in a country-specific inter-service meeting.

CPRs are then shared and discussed with Member States in the relevant geographic Council Working Groups, and with senior management in an inter-service meeting. They become the basis for the follow-up work by the various services, EU Delegations and Member States.

Where useful or necessary, the in-country assessment and the resulting CPRs may be complemented by conflict analyses, which can deepen (through scenario analysis, actor mapping, etc.) the analysis of structural risk factors carried out in the context of the EU conflict EWS[16]. Conflict sensitivity assessments may then build on conflict analyses to ensure do-no-harm approaches, to minimise potential negative impacts and to support inclusive peacebuilding.

As a new component in the EWS, a follow-up mission will take place approximately one and a half years after the first in-country assessment. The follow-up mission will serve to: (1) update the structural risk factors assessment in view of changes in the risk environment of the country; (2) delve deeper into the assessment of the most relevant priority risk domains and related preventive actions by using analytical tools such as scenario planning and theory of change, and carry out conflict sensitivity assessments of specific programmes; and (3) assess the implementation of previously identified options for action, develop adjustments and pinpoint new opportunities for engagement, which can be reflected in an updated CPR or separate action plan.

Main stakeholders: EU Delegations ♦ Commission DG ECHO field offices ♦ EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Missions in-country ♦ EU Special Representatives (EUSR) ♦ Member States' Embassies in non-EU countries ♦ Management and geographic and thematic staff in EEAS and Commission headquarters ♦ Council Working Groups

3. Monitoring

The monitoring phase seeks to address the question of how the EU conflict EWS and the actions identified in the CPR have helped to address the underlying risks of conflict in priority countries. **Assessing the implementation and results of the identified actions** is a key component of this phase. The effectiveness of EU actions to mitigate structural risks of conflict has a bearing on the very effectiveness of the EU conflict EWS as an EU conflict prevention tool. Lessons learned during the process and potential improvements to the EU conflict EWS are also analysed in this context.

One year after the first in-country mission, political officers from EU Delegations, with support from headquarters if needed, draft a report in consultation with Member States' in-country missions. The report provides an update on the risk environment in the country and the progress made on the options for action identified in the CPR. This **EU Delegation interim report** feeds into the preparation of the follow-up mission and is presented to the relevant Council Working Group(s).

Two years after the first mission, and after the follow-up mission, EU Ambassadors prepare a substantive report, together with Member States present in the country. This **Heads of Missions report** builds on the follow-up mission and considers how the EU conflict EWS and the proposed actions have contributed to addressing the underlying risk areas. It also assesses the implementation of

[16] 2020 Guidance Note on Use of Conflict Analysis in Support of EU External Action (*forthcoming*)

the identified actions and, where feasible, their impact on the conflict dynamics and risk trajectory of the country.

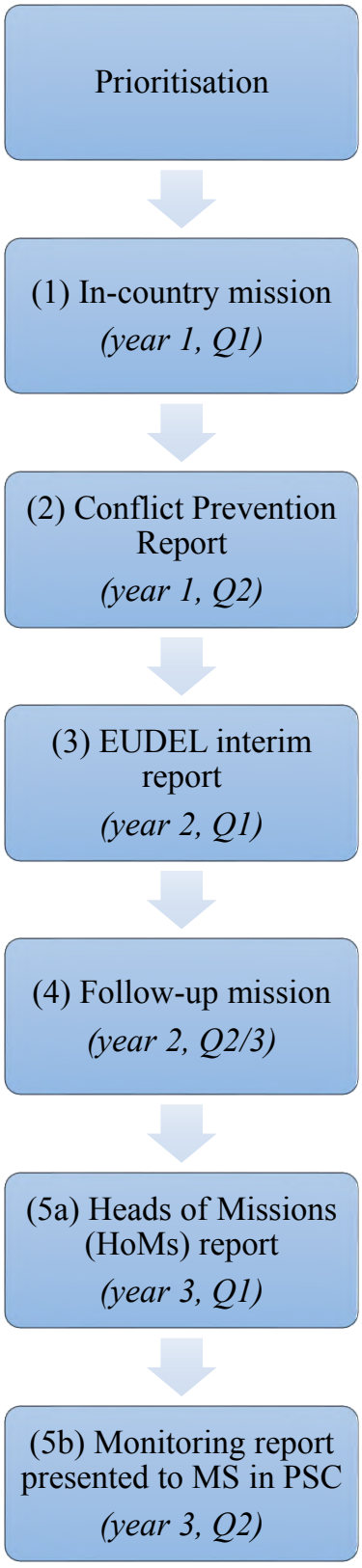
These Heads of Missions reports from the different priority countries feed into an **overall monitoring report on the EU conflict EWS**, which the EEAS (ISP.2) prepares with the support of the relevant services in the EEAS and the Commission, for the inter-service senior management meeting and the PSC. This overall report also gathers lessons learned and best practices from all country reports.

Presentation of the EU conflict EWS monitoring report in the PSC concludes the monitoring phase, and with it the EU conflict early warning cycle for a priority country. Once a country ceases to be an EU conflict early warning priority, it nevertheless remains on the EU radar. The detailed risk assessments, and the deep knowledge of conflict dynamics acquired during the two-and-a-half-year early warning process, inform complementary EU analysis on a given country for the years to come.

The EU conflict early warning process itself, with its emphasis on early action, provides a path to understanding the effectiveness of EU actions undertaken to mitigate specific conflict risks, in a variety of contexts. In this respect, the EU conflict EWS may help shape the trajectory of ongoing or future programming and interventions, and monitor them to ensure that they are conflict-sensitive. The EU conflict EWS also helps strengthen partnerships in the relevant sectors of EU operations in the country concerned, and globally. Finally, lessons learned during an EU conflict EWS cycle will benefit the system as a whole, further improving the EU conflict EWS as an effective EU tool to prevent violent conflict.

Main stakeholders: Management and staff in the EEAS and the Commission, including EU Delegations ♦ Political and Security Committee

Annex I: Timeline of the new EWS cycle



Annex II: Who does what?

The preparatory risk-scanning step of the EU conflict EWS compiles risk information from open sources and intelligence as a basis for subsequent prioritisation, shared assessment and follow-up and monitoring.

	Prioritisation	**Shared assessment and follow-up**	**Monitoring**
EU Delegations; other field presences	Provide input to geographic desks' review of risk information to prepare for the inter-service meeting at senior management level.	Complete the Assessment of Structural Risks of Conflict based on structured discussions among staff from all EUDEL sections and contribute to the identification of relevant options for action. Comment on and discuss the CPR. Identify the focus and contribute to the analysis of the follow-up mission. Implement recommendations with regard to EU actions.	Contribute to reporting on progress and measures taken to increase impact in conflict prevention/ peacebuilding: 1. Prepare an interim report one year after the in-country assessment. 2. Prepare substantive HoMs report, together with Member States present in the country two years after the first in-country assessment. Sustained monitoring of the risks and actions identified.
Geographic desks; EEAS and Commission staff (geographic and thematic services)	Review conflict risk information to prepare for the inter-service meeting at senior management level and carry out relevant internal consultations on adjusting risk levels and on initial proposals for a list of priority countries.	Agree on a tailor-made timeline for follow-up activities to serve as a road map for timely, relevant and coherent responses. Carry out/participate in the in-country shared assessment missions and co-facilitate the in-country assessment. Draft and discuss the CPR based on the Assessment of Structural Risks of Conflict. Present and discuss the CPR in the relevant Council Working Group or Council body.	Report on progress and propose possible adjustments to increase impact in prevention/ peacebuilding.
Management: EEAS and Commission	Identify yearly priority countries for the EU conflict early warning iteration to support conflict prevention, peacebuilding, resilience and conflict sensitivity.	Discuss and provide guidance on the orientation and level of ambition of CPRs.	Review progress and reporting.
Conflict Prevention Lead Persons' (CPLP) Network	Coordinate input by EEAS Managing Directorates and the Commission to the Regional Risk Tables and 'Long list'.	Act as principal points of contact and information liaisons between their Managing Directorate/Service and the Early Warning Team or focal points in the Commission.	Act as principal points of contact and information liaisons between their Managing Directorate/ Service and the Early Warning Team or focal

			points in the Commission.
Council/ Member States	PSC discussion provides input and guidance to risk identification. EU conflict EWS priorities presented and discussed in the PSC.	Member States' Embassies in-country contribute to structured discussions around conflict risks as input to Assessments of Structural Risks of Conflict. Member States identify and implement bilateral preventive action. Council Working Group discussions on CPRs.	Council Working Group discussions on progress and action. PSC discussion on the EU conflict EWS progress report.
ISP (MD CSDP-CR, EEAS)	Coordinate the overall EU conflict EWS process. Compile and present preparatory risk information. Coordinate the input to risk scanning and prioritisation. Coordinate overall ISP.D contribution to the EU conflict EWS exercise.	Facilitate in-country structured discussions on conflict risks and options for action. Support development of CPRs and facilitate discussion and agreement thereon. Facilitate follow-up missions.	Coordinate and support discussion on progress reporting. Coordinate the CPLP Network and liaise with relevant geographic and thematic teams in the EEAS and in the Commission. Internal and external communication on the EU conflict EWS.

Annex III: Indicators for the Global Conflict Risk Index (2020)[17]

Risk Area	Indicator	Source
Political	Regime Type	Center for Systemic Peace
	Lack of Democracy	Center for Systemic Peace
	Government Effectiveness	World Bank
	Level of Repression	PTS
	Empowerment Rights	CIRI
Security	Recent Internal Conflict	HIIK; UCDP/PRIO
	Neighbours with Highly Violent Conflict	HIIK; UCDP/PRIO
	Years Since Highly Violent Conflict	HIIK; UCDP/PRIO
Social	Corruption	World Bank
	Ethnic Power Change	ETH Zurich
	Ethnic Compilation	ETH Zurich
	Transnational Ethnic Bonds	CIDCM
	Homicide Rate	World Bank
Economic	GDP per capita	World Bank
	Income Inequality	Harvard Dataverse Network
	Openness	World Bank
	Food Security	FAO
	Unemployment	World Bank
Geography	Water Stress	WRI
	Oil Production	World Bank
	Structural Constraints	BTI
	Climate	DIGITAL.CSIC
Demography	Population Size	UNDESA
	Youth Bulge	UNDESA
	Infant Mortality	World Bank

[17] The choice of indicators reflects academic research on their correlation with conflict risk and the availability of datasets that cover all non-EU countries. The choice of indicators may be updated in the future.