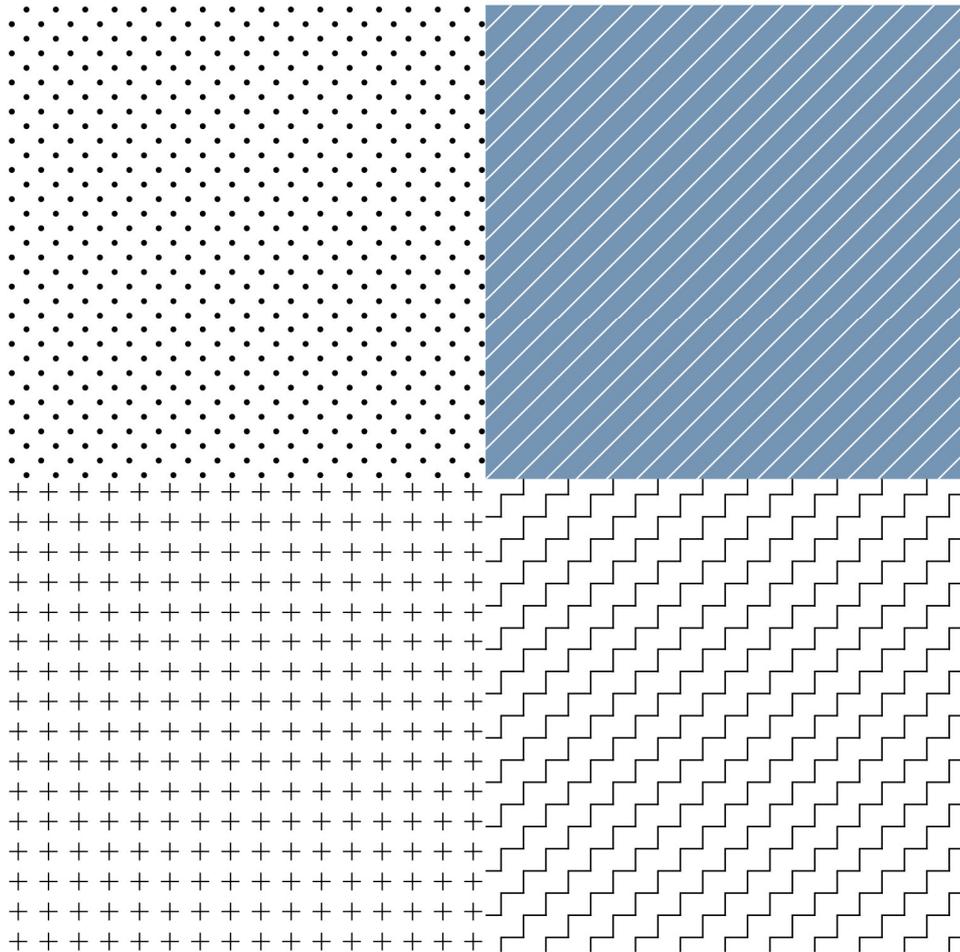


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ENHANCING EU PEACEBUILDING CAPABILITIES



A Roundtable on Questioning the Coherence of the EU External Action in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

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Colophon

A ROUNDTABLE ON QUESTIONING THE COHERENCE OF THE EU EXTERNAL ACTION IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

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Deliverable 4.5: Community of Practice Event on Coherence

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Education on Negotiation

Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

The *Community of Practice Roundtable on Coherence* was aimed at creating a dialogue around two major topics linked to coherence. The discussion was focused on: addressing the current problems and challenges of coherence between the actors involved in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and highlighting the economic dimension of conflict prevention and peacebuilding through the role of private sector, and the link to economic diplomacy. The event was followed by an open debate including comments from civil society and policymakers.

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Introduction

The Community of Practice Roundtable on Coherence was organised at the Quaker House in Brussels on 23 June 2016, on the following theme: *Civil Society, Private Sector, Economic Diplomacy – Questioning the Coherence of the EU External Action in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*. The event has been co-organised with Build Up on the logistical aspects (venue, communication and catering).

Summary of the discussion

Addressing the current problems and challenges linked to coherence between peacebuilding and conflict prevention actors

In order to improve its coherence, the EU needs to identify the main problems linked to enforcing the EU external action's strategy, taking into account the various realities and actors on the ground. Particular attention must be paid to the EU's definition of civil society.

Does the definition of civil society provided by the EU enable EU actors to effectively implement the comprehensive approach? Does the EU consider that the private sector belongs to civil society?

At the debate, it was emphasised that during mediation processes the EU (or European organisations) brings outsiders to the EU. Therefore, civil society actors must be in the room, and must be part of the process. The EU should see beyond governmental institutions, as civil society plays a tremendous role in conflict prevention. The EU should not overlook private funding, as they are often the main funders of CSOs. It should see civil society in a broader manner.

A speaker expressed that we should talk about coherence in terms of collaboration and linkages between different sections of society and of government, and different actors. Each sector, civil society, private or military, has a different nature. If we talk about working towards a prevention of conflict, it means to work on frameworks, how to relate to each other. In many cases, they are not well developed and they are too often limited to humanitarian NGOs. A parallel between civil-military relationships and the civil society / private sector relationships was drawn. Joint work between civil society and the military is not easy, as their cooperation is limited. Guidance about best practices and worst practices on joint work should be integrated within the above mentioned frameworks. While some civil society organisations are reluctant to work with the military, joint exercises on learning and practice will allow both civil society and the military to work together and learn from each other. It facilitates future cooperation. This framework can be applied to the case of the private sector. As the definition of civil society is very broad, more detailed frameworks are necessary although these should be a means rather than an end in itself.

According to another participant, the private sector cannot be considered as a civil society actor, and there is a risk in integrating it within the EU definition of civil society. This is

due to the relation established between the private sector and for-profit companies, which is not compatible with general interest and peacebuilding. The participant highlighted the EU Global Strategy document, and its definition of “resilience”, which includes not only state resilience, but also social resilience. It was expressed that “the EU should initiate a similar work regarding the definition of civil society, considering its broad scope”.

Does the EU funding for peacebuilding contribute to the empowerment of local civil society, and does it enable the EU to work in coherence with local actors?

A participant highlighted the role played by EU delegations (EUDs) on the ground in the relationship between the EU and CSOs in conflict situation, through the example of Guatemala. After the resignation of the corrupted government in Guatemala in 2015, the EUD was contacted by many organizations, among which small NGOs, the military, private companies, and members of the government. The population did not recognize national NGOs as legitimate anymore due to their close links with the former corrupted government. In this situation, the EUD faced the difficulties of – on the one hand supporting smaller NGOs that were not considered as legitimate by the government, and on the other hand of explaining the conditions of EU funding to small CSOs that were not used to deal with international funders. The EUD dealt with the issue of NGOs being considered as business actors, which fed the mainstreamed idea of incompatibility between peacebuilding and business. Moreover, it was mentioned that funding can do harm if not accompanied by human resources.

It was suggested that we should look beyond EUDs, as the actions and funds of Member States are more flexible, with smaller funds and projects.

One speaker highlighted that an important issue is the amount of EU funds dedicated to CSOs. Indeed, the EU funds are often based on geographic criteria. Only a few are based on thematic criteria. With EU funds, there is a risk that the EU would be limited in a role of funder, and the CSOs in a role of service providers. The EU and the CSOs should act more as partners.

Moreover it was pointed out that in Bosnia the EU considered the population’s opinion, and not only the government’s. At that time, the population refused all official CSOs, which were too close to the government and were not considered as legitimate anymore. In addition, the aim of the CSDN mission (EPLO) was to bring CSOs voice. It encompasses the idea that it is important to go beyond the governmental institutions and institutional NGOs.

A panellist brought up the example of Algeria, where EU funding destroyed networks of CSOs. Indeed, the EU started funding only individual CSOs, and competition grew between them.

Another speaker illustrated the EU’s willingness to improve the EU’s external coherence through the Global Strategy. It was pointed out that the aim of this document is to give guidelines at the global level, in associating different policies from the EU (trade, diplomacy, peacebuilding, etc.) and to show how people and teams can work together within the EU in a coherent way.

Highlighting the economic dimension of conflict prevention and peacebuilding through the role of private sector, and the link to economic diplomacy

The economic dimension of conflict needs to be addressed in order to explore the important role played by the private sector. In that sense, the private sector can be considered as both a conflict or / and peace driver. The role of the private sector on conflict prevention and peacebuilding might be taken into consideration in the new reflexion on EU economic diplomacy.

To what extent are partnerships between the EU and the private sector possible and useful?

During the discussion it was highlighted that corporate social responsibility is part of the EU agenda for action. But in terms of links between Human Rights and Business, EU's action is split in different fields of EU regulation. The actions of global companies have complex contradictory effects. Example: on one hand they create jobs, and on the other hand they can damage the social cohesion by employing only young people, or by preferring to employ people from one ethnic group, etc.

- Regarding capacity gap, companies have a lot of financial and cultural resources. They may employ 300 people, and actually reach 3000 people (included the workers' families etc.), which gave a comparative advantage relative to national companies.
- Regarding governance gap, EU's interventions can be encouraged or cancelled by global enterprises, as they build their own zone of rules. Therefore, the EU must encourage good governance by the enterprises. The example of Kosovo, where the EU did nothing for sustainability in the post-conflict situation, was given.

Further, it was mentioned that with regard to conflict and peace, the role of trade and the private sector is complex. Examples from Kashmir, Ukraine and West Africa are showing that supporting trade and investment or the private sector do not automatically lead to peace or development.

Can economic diplomacy be a path for coherence among the EU institutions and policies? How can economic diplomacy improve the action of the EU in terms of peacebuilding and conflict prevention?

The importance of a holistic and foresight view was highlighted, according to which the EU should associate industry in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, to make sure that wherever we invest, it is in foreseeing systems, which will lead to progress.

Lastly, it was pointed out that we should not forget that the people working in DG TRADE have economics backgrounds, and are not especially aware of peacebuilding impacts. In consequence, this link between peacebuilding, trade and economic diplomacy is not going to happen.

Speakers

- *Cristina Barrios* is a Policy Advisor at the Strategic Planning Division of the External Action Service (EEAS). In this capacity, Cristina Barrios is part of the team supporting the ongoing process of reflection, elaboration and outreach for the European Union Global Strategy on foreign and security policy.
- *Linda Benraïis* is Adjunct Professor of Comparative Law and Mediation and Director of "Governance and Conflict Resolution" Programs at ESSEC IRENE.
- *Mary Martin* is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of International Development, London School of Economics (LSE). Her research focuses on how state and non-state actors, including businesses, can benefit from the application of the human security approach.
- *Ben Moore* is a Senior Policy Officer at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) where he coordinates the organisation's work on EU funding for peacebuilding. He has extensive knowledge about EU funding instruments to support local CSOs.
- *Sonya Reines* is the Executive Director of EPLO, and is a peacebuilding professional with over ten years of experience in international conflict resolution.
- *Didier Schmitt* is currently a member of the space Task Force at the European External Action Service, working on space policy centered on security, geopolitical and diplomatic issues.
- *Heino van Houwelingen* is Team Leader Peace & Conflict Advice at the Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Division of the EEAS. His past experience working with Member States and NGOs gave him an extensive knowledge regarding coherence of the EU's external action.
- *Gabriella Vogelaar* is Project Coordinator EU Peacebuilding Review at GPPAC. She manages the EU funded Horizon 2020 project, "Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding" (WOSCAP). She has five years of experience working in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, on topics such as human security, the comprehensive approach and civil-military cooperation; and managed a project towards strengthening civil society in Mali.