

Developing EU's Crisis Management: Focus on Personnel

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- Overall, EU personnel in EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations are committed and well-qualified. However, there is great variation in personnel qualifications, skillsets, and aptitude.
- CSDP missions and operations are often challenged by understaffing and short rotation cycles. These challenges could be mitigated by pre-deployment training and standardized hand-over processes, which are adhered to.
- Four main challenges were identified in relation to personnel: (1) difficulties in finding and recruiting high quality recruits as well as lack of standardisation and adherence to standardisation in recruiting (2) weaknesses and disparities in hand-over processes and task-specific training, (3) absence of streamlined mechanisms to deal with and remove personnel from a mission if problems arise, and (4) low importance given to soft-skills in recruitment processes.
- Through standardization and especially through adherence to the standardization already present, these challenges can be mitigated.

Since 2003 the European Union (EU) has undertaken more than 30 missions and operations in Europe, Africa, and Asia as part of EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. Through these missions and operations the EU aims at keeping peace, preventing conflicts, strengthening international security, and supporting the rule of law.¹ In the IECEU-project, ten missions and operations were comparatively analysed to find potential for improving the effectiveness of EU's Crisis management.

The findings of the IECEU-project show that mandate creation and coordination with local and international actors have significant influence on the effectiveness of the missions and operations. In addition to these two factors, staff and their competences play an important role in creating effectiveness. This policy brief assesses the current situation regarding staffing, and gives policy recommendations related to personnel to further increase effectiveness of EU CSDP missions and operations.

The **IECEU** (Improving the Effectiveness of Capabilities in EU Conflict Prevention) is a project aspiring to enhance the conflict prevention capabilities of the European Union. The project has received funding from the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation HORIZON 2020. The IECEU consortium consists of 11 organizations which represent civilian, research and military expertise from 7 different European countries.

SaferGlobe is an independent Finnish think tank which produces high-level research and tools to promote peace and security. SaferGlobe is a partner in the IECEU consortium.

Missions and operations combine EU, local, and third state personnel

EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations differ greatly in the size of their personnel. This divergence is also evident in the ten missions and operations analyzed in the IECEU. Figure 1 presents the missions and operations and their number of personnel in 2014, only year when all missions and operations analyzed were in operation.

It is to be expected that the size of a mission or operation changes during its life cycle. EUFOR Althea (European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina), for example, had a staff of 7 000 at its highest while in 2016 it had a personnel of roughly 600.² There are notable size differences not attributable to fluctuation., EUFOR Althea peaked at 7 000 personnel, whereas EUBAM Libya (EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya) numbered 57 at its peak.³

In addition to differences in the sizes of missions and operations, Figure 1 shows differences in their personnel composition. Two military operations, EUFOR Althea and EUFOR RCA (European Union Force in the Central African Republic) have had relatively large contributions from states outside the EU. There are also large differences in the number of local staff. Whereas civilian missions typically have a

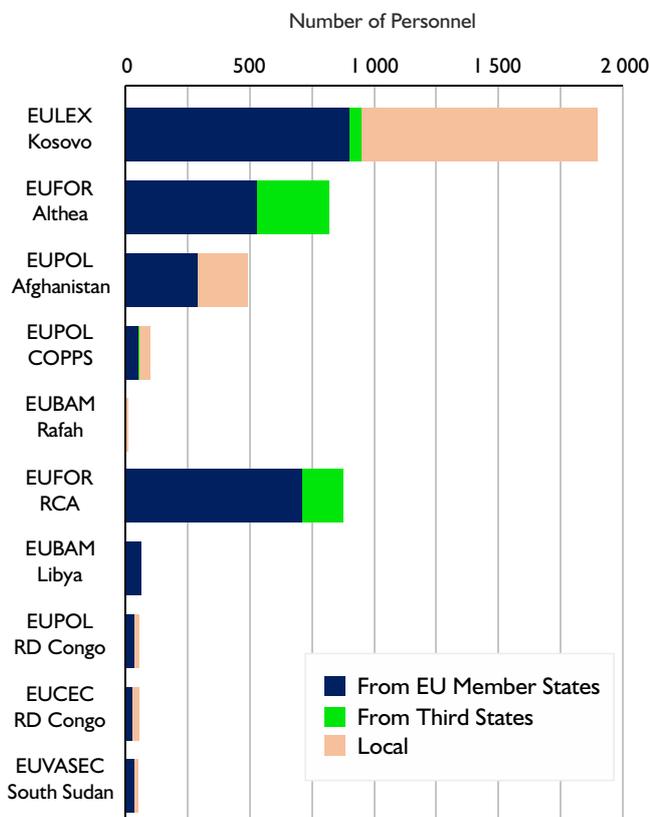


Figure 1. EU, third state, and local personnel of the missions and operations.⁴

small or even significant number of local staff, military operations rarely take local staff.⁵ Often locally contracted staff are valuable contributors to the missions by opening communication channels with local actors and working as important bridge builders.⁶ The local staff may also increase the sustainability of impact.

From October 2014 to October 2016 the total number of personnel in all ongoing civil missions was on average 81% of the total number of personnel approved in the Operational Plans of the same missions. Figure 2 presents the number of personnel approved in the Operational Plan and the actual number of personnel for three missions.

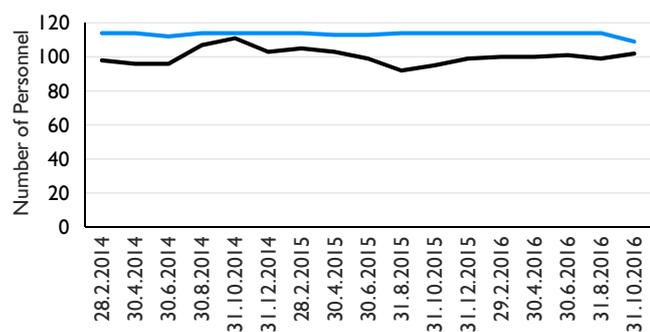
The number of staff often increases in the early phase of the mission or operation. Towards the end of the mission or operation, the number of personnel typically decreases, as in the case of EUPOL Afghanistan (EU Police Mission in Afghanistan) which was closed at the end of 2016.

Finding and recruiting appropriate, specialized staff to missions is not an easy task.⁷ Financial inducements are seldom sufficient motivation for specialized staff, who often have interesting, well-paid and safe positions in their home countries.⁸ For locally contracted staff, financial incentives are often clear, but seconded staff are motivated by a variety of reasons, which are both personal and related to career progress. A diminishing of the pool of potential recruits also increases the pressure on missions and operations to accept the personnel that they can recruit regardless of its skill-set. Difficulties in recruiting affect missions unevenly. EUPOL COPPS (EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories) had few problems in recruiting staff. The mission has been considered attractive because of its unique location in the Middle East. Conversely, EUBAM Libya had severe problems in recruiting personnel and never met the authorized size of over 160. Especially after the security situation started deteriorating, member states were not willing to send recruits.⁹

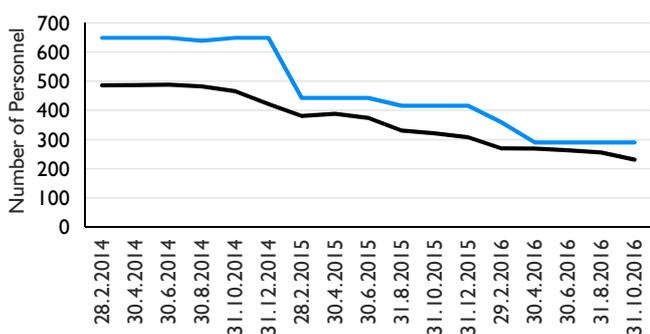
Short rotation cycles necessitate effective pre-deployment training and hand-over processes

Staffing is further complicated by short rotations of only six months to 1 year, with limited opportunity for contract renewal. A more reasonable length for a rotation was considered to be 2–3 years. The negative impact of short rotations is especially noticeable in strategic positions where strategic level continuity, long-term guidance, and leadership is required. In these positions up to a year is needed for

EUPOL COPPS



EUPOL Afghanistan



EUBAM Libya

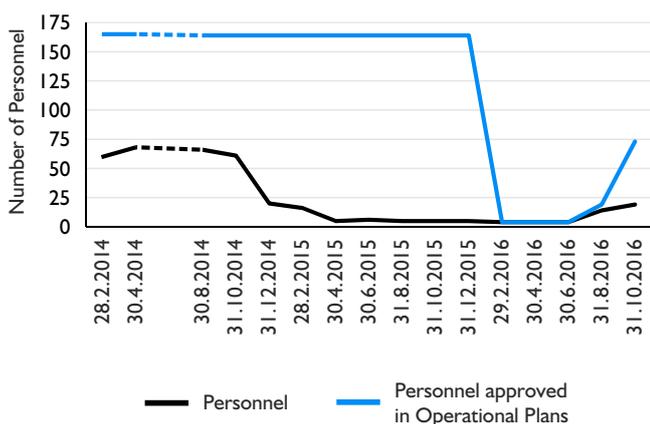


Figure 2. Personnel and personnel approved in the Operational Plans 2014–2016.¹⁰

a person to reach the necessary knowledge about local issues and the system. For example, it takes time to establish trustworthy relationships with local stakeholders.¹¹ Negative effects of short rotations can be mitigated through pre-deployment training and well-designed, and consistently used hand-over processes.

The preparedness of recruits for their new tasks varies greatly. Pre-deployment training ranges from nothing to five-day courses depending on the seconding member state. In addition to generalized pre-deployment training, task-specific training is especially useful for some positions, where national practices and EU practices differ. Training is widely offered by expert institutions, and its uptake is not limited by availability but rather, funding and

priorities. Creating and enforcing guidelines on pre-deployment training ensures that EU personnel are ready for the tasks at hand.

Hand-over processes are crucial in ensuring transference of institutional memory especially in the light of the short rotations. Although there are clear guidelines for hand-overs, it seems that often these are not followed which leads to weak, inconsistent, or even non-existent hand-over procedures. Weak hand-over processes impact effectiveness negatively as incoming experts need to invest additional time in understanding their tasks and the situation.

Recruitment of skilled and knowledgeable staff is a key factor for effectiveness

Although overall, the CSDP mission and operation personnel were committed and well qualified, there were exceptions.¹² The variety of selection and recruiting systems, mechanisms and procedures, and a lack of standardization lead to inconsistent competences in the field.¹³ Moreover, the current recruitment processes focus on formal qualifications although soft-skills may be vital in crisis situations. Important soft-skills in crisis management include cultural awareness and respect, intercultural communication, language skills, flexibility and the ability to deal with uncertainty. Regional experience is also valuable in operations close to EU member state, staff contributions from neighboring states strengthen cultural awareness.¹⁴ These soft-skills directly impact the ability of the recruited staff to carry out their work effectively especially in cooperation with local actors.

Inconsistencies in recruiting practices affect how and whether planned work is carried out, but they also have the potential of creating personnel issues for missions and operations to deal with. Some personnel issues can be mitigated, prevented or corrected through training, communication, operational culture, and a clear code of conduct. However, if a member of staff is sufficiently unmotivated, unsuited or, in the very worst cases, has a criminal record, mission leadership is limited in its possibility to correct the situation in the field. Crisis management missions and operations seem to vary greatly in terms of sending ill-qualified personnel home. Some operations and missions sent home those who did not meet the standards “without delay”¹⁵ while other operations and missions seem to retain unsuitable staff for a number of reasons, including perhaps most importantly, maintaining positions and headcount. Dealing with

personnel issues drains resources from the mission and thus systems of pre-deployment training and recruitment, which ensure good outcomes are vital.

Beyond personnel issues, CSDP missions and operations are troubled by understaffing, which directly impacts the ability of the mission or operation to carry out its tasks efficiently. Understaffing can occur because the ability or willingness of member states to contribute personnel do not meet with the mandated goals or the mission's current needs. Member states do not necessarily send their best staff to operations and missions even though demanding operational environments would require experienced personnel.¹⁶ Figure 3 shows that there are notable differences between member states as to how many secondees they have sent to the EU CSDP civilian missions. These numbers are also one indicator of the involvement and interest of the member states in crisis management and conflict prevention.

The importance of qualified and motivated operational staff

cannot be overestimated. The knowledge and skills of the personnel are a key factor in creating effectiveness as CSDP missions and operations rely on the expertise of their personnel. High level expertise is also one of European Union's main strengths in crisis management, and as such, should be prioritised wherever possible.

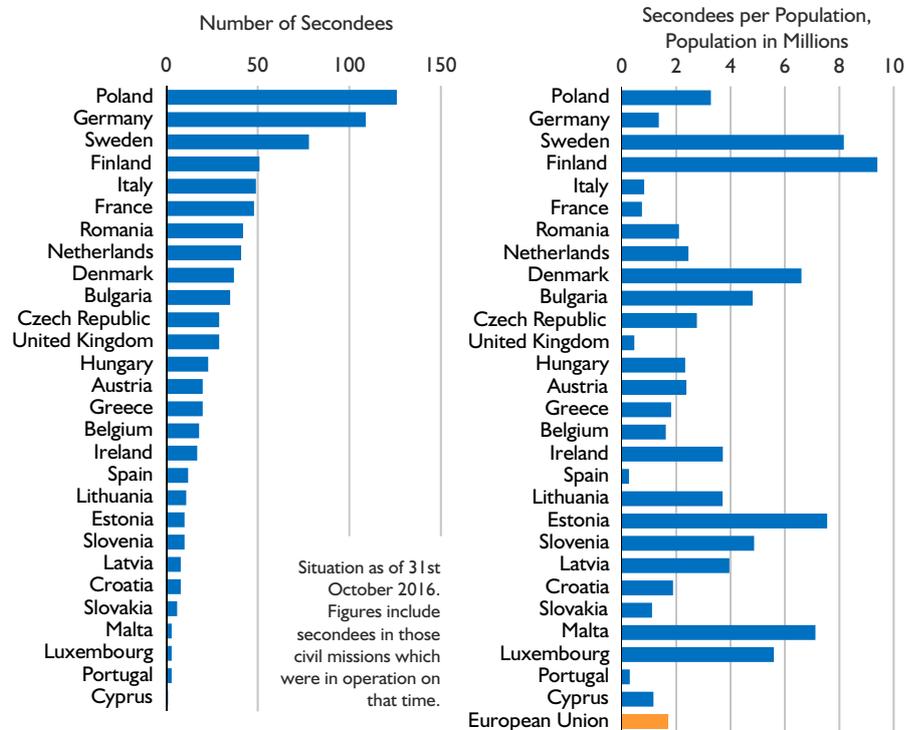


Figure 3. Countries by their personnel contributions to civil missions.¹⁷

Policy recommendations

- Ensure that Skype video interviews or interviews in person in Brussels for higher positions are possible.
- Standardize requirements for all personnel (seconded and contracted) whenever possible (including e.g. medical and security certification) and adhere to the standardization.
- Include soft-skills assessment especially for more strategic positions.
- Emphasise contextual knowledge, intercultural communication, flexibility, and respect.
- Make pre-deployment training mandatory with no exceptions. Feedback from the training should be used to further evaluate the suitability of the candidate for the position in question.
- Establish an on-line system which contains information about all the training provided across the EU relevant to CSDP.
- Increase rotation length where possible.
- Develop more task- and context-specific training and ensure that it is available in missions and operations.
- Create structures that allow the removal of unsuitable personnel quickly and efficiently.

The references of this publication can be found online at: <https://tinyurl.com/sg-policy-brief-1-18-ref>

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