



International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations

Introductory Elements on the European Union's Policy in the Protection of Civilians

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Regional actors, and in particular the African Union and the European Union, are more and more involved in peacekeeping. The first International Forum of Challenges, two years ago in Paris, was dedicated to “Partnerships – the United Nations, the European Union and the Regional Dimensions of Peace Operations: Examples of Cooperation within the Framework of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter”. So it is logical today to address the question of regional approaches of this issue of Protection of Civilians for the implementation of UN principles and in developing operational guidelines for such partnership to occur.

To begin with, allow me to say a few words on the EU approach in relation to the protection of civilians.

1) The EU commitment to the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

1.1 Context

The EU plays a major role in crisis management and peace building, notably in the Balkans and in Africa. Its operational strategy towards the protection of civilians is to be placed in a global humanitarian context:

- restrictions of the humanitarian access by governments and non-state actors who disregard the norms set by the international humanitarian law.
- indiscriminate and disproportionate recourse to the use of force and the use of brutal warfare methods including systematic use of rape and sexual violence.
- targeted assaults, expulsions and assassinations against humanitarian workers.

The types of missions, whether military or civilian, carried out by the EU require high sensitivity and awareness of the protection gaps for civilian populations. The EU commitment in this area has translated in a number of normative and operational developments.

1.2 Normative tools

Since 2003 the EU common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has developed significantly and the number of missions and operations has risen. The EU has developed a set of instruments to frame its doctrine and interventions:

- the “Guidelines on the Protection of Civilians in EU-led crisis management operations” (2003)
- the updated guidelines “on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) (2009): the purpose of these Guidelines is to set out operational tools for the European Union and its institutions and bodies to promote compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL).

1. 3 Operational translations:

As a result many current missions/operations include important protection and human rights promotion activities in their mandates:

For example:

- PoC/providing a safe and secure environment for refugees and internally displaced persons was a key objective of EUFOR Tchad/RCA.
- Civilian missions, such as EUMM Georgia and EUPOL DRC, also have an important monitoring and reporting role in this regard.

2) A specific illustration: the EU and the “women peace and security agenda”

2.1 An EU priority

The European Union has particular policy commitments with respect to promoting the role of women in peace building and enhancing the implementation of relevant UNSC Resolutions in its external actions (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889).

Under the French presidency of the EU, a conference was co-organised in October 2008 with UNIFEM in cooperation with the EC to increase understanding of the subject matter.

A key policy document was subsequently elaborated in December 2008: it sets out a common EU approach to the implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820. It provides comprehensive guidance to ensure that the Union’s external actions are shaped to protect women from violence and that they contribute to increased equality between women and men during and after armed conflict and in situations of fragility.

2.2 Operational translation in mandates, recruitment, training and reporting

- Definition of mandates for EU missions

In the field of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the Council adopted an operational paper on ‘the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the context of ESDP’ with recommendations to integrate a gender perspective at all stages of ESDP missions/operations, from the planning to the reporting and lessons identified. Resources are earmarked for gender work ; accountability and monitoring mechanisms are established.

Security and judicial aspects of the SSR missions directly relate to sexual exploitation and abuse and gender based violence, as well as ensuring women’s security, human rights and agency with recourse to judicial process for punishment.

- Recruitment of gender advisors in ESDP missions/operations:

Nearly all civilian and military missions/operations in which the EU is engaged today have one or several gender advisors. The experience so far about the impact and value added of gender advisors has been very positive. Gender awareness contributes to operational effectiveness by gaining credibility among the local population.

- Pre-deployment training

Member States will offer relevant training courses to train their nationals.

The European Security and Defence College reflects the gender perspective in all relevant training activities. Gender sensitivity must be assured throughout the chain of command.

A gender component will systematically be included in the training courses related to all relevant sectors such as DDR, SSR and electoral observation.

The Council stressed a zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence and prostitution (as was iterated on the 'soldier card' for the ESDP EUFOR RD Congo mission in 2006)

- Reporting instruments

Gender issues are considered in all relevant evaluations undertaken, such as the 2009 thematic evaluation of the EC support to conflict prevention and peace building.

The EU is currently developing a set of indicators to track its performance. The drafting process is led by an ad-hoc EU Task Force on Women Peace and Security which held consultations with NGO networks, UNIFEM. Draft indicators are tested against the EU action in Congo DRC and in Afghanistan. The endorsement of EU indicators is expected shortly, and should provide the EU with further tools for mainstreaming its efforts.

Note: The EU action remains complementary to the actions and strategies developed by EU Member states. Within the EU, 12 EU Member states have already developed National action plans to implement UNSCR 1325 and a number are in preparation (including that of France, due for the end of June). Some have integrated specific provisions of UNSCR 1325 into their domestic policy and legislation.

3) Perspectives

With the combination of the EU's civil and military resources, the EU is particularly well placed for securing an integrated approach to PoC, both at the political level and in carrying out mission mandates.

It is vital that impunity is adequately addressed. Ratification of the ICC Rome Statute should be further encouraged.

The EU could also work to engage with non-state actors in the process.

The EU could strengthen its cooperation with other bodies, the UN at the first place but also other regional organisations, including the African Union, on the responsibility to protect and notably the preventive dimension. For instance the EU has expressed its readiness to co-operate with the UN through the New Horizons process in further developing UN concepts and guidelines (including on capacity requirements), as well as training programmes in relation to PoC, drawing on the EU's work and experience related to this domain.