Summary of the Policy Dialogue on

The European Union as crisis manager: patterns and prospects

Brussels, 21 November 2013
SUMMARY

The European Union (EU) is increasingly engaged in managing crises inside and outside Europe. Over the past two years, the EU has stepped up its capacities and is reorganising its toolbox to enable it to respond to escalating and complex crises. A new role for the EU as crisis manager involves a dynamic process of reorganising response mechanisms across the various institutions. This process was, in part, kick-started by the Lisbon Treaty, which calls for joined-up crisis management abroad and transboundary response mechanisms at home.

Speakers and participants at this Policy Dialogue discussed EU capacities across policy sectors, institutions and agencies, and the new forms of cooperation evolving among the EU28 to respond to humanitarian and human-induced disasters around the world. Conflicts simmering at the EU’s borders – Mali, Libya and Syria – and super typhoon Haiyan that destroyed large swathes of fragile archipelago in the Philippines and killed more than 5,200 people provided a sobering backdrop for reflection.

 Speakers agreed on that “the field [of civil crisis management] is progressing the most in EU”. With the new EU Civil Protection legislation in place there will be a shift from ad-hoc to pre-planned, pre-committed Union capacities. EU Member States are increasingly assured that they will receive assistance from the EU pool of response capacities in times of domestic and transboundary crisis. The participants identified three areas (cyber-attacks, critical infrastructure and nuclear security) which will pose significant challenges for the EU. Future crisis will be transboundary (crossing sectors, geographical borders and division lines between EU and Member State institutions), and often climate related.
PROGRAMME

Address: Polak Room, Résidence Palace
Rue de la Loi 155, 1040 Brussels

15.10 Registration

15.30 Welcome remarks
   Rosa Balfour, Senior Policy Analyst and Head of the Europe in the World Programme, European Policy Centre

15.35 Introduction
   Mark Rhinard, Head of the Europe Research Programme, Swedish Institute of International Affairs and Associate Professor, Stockholm University

15.40 Keynote speech
   Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

15.55 Question and answer session

16.00 Panel discussion
   Magnus Ekengren, Associate Professor and Director of the Programme for European Security Research, Swedish National Defence College (Chair)
   Erik Windmar, Member of Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Home Affairs
   Agostino Miozzo, Managing Director for Crisis Response and Operational Coordination, European External Action Service
   Florika Fink-Hooijer, Director for Strategy, Policy and International Co-operation, Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, European Commission
   Helena Lindberg, Director-General of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency

16.50 Question and answer session

17.25 Closing remarks
   Rosa Balfour, Senior Policy Analyst and Head of the Europe in the World Programme, European Policy Centre

17.30 End of the Policy Dialogue

1 This Policy Dialogue event was held under the auspices of the EPC’s Europe in the World Programme, in partnership with the the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). This summary draws on the EPC’s report The European Union as Crisis Manager – 21 November 2013.
BACKGROUND

The Policy Dialogue bears the same name as the title of the recently released book *The European Union as crisis manager: patterns and prospect* (Cambridge University Press 2013) by Arjen Boin, Magnus Ekengren and Mark Rhinard. The book presents a holistic perspective on EU crisis management including capacities across policy sectors, institutions, and agencies. The Dialogue was a follow up to the March 24, 2011 Policy Dialogue *Searching for Solidarity: Developing EU capacities for crisis and disaster management*. The 2013 Dialogue provided an excellent opportunity to focus on the lessons learned during the two and a half years that had passed since the previous dialogue.

POLICY DIALOGUE OPENING

*Rosa Balfour*, Senior Policy Analyst and Head of the Europe in the World Programme at the European Policy Centre, set the stage for discussion and debate by reminding participants how much the EU has achieved in this field over the past decade. “A lot has been achieved over the past two years ... but there is no room for complacency.” We have no idea when the next crisis will be or what shape it will take. Will it be European or global? What tools will we need in the future?” Balfour said that it is important to continue mapping out the tools and responses to ensure they are operational. Academics and policymakers addressing these issues have been working separately. “It is time to bring thinking together and be innovative,” she said.

*Mark Rhinard*, Head of the Europe Research Programme at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and Associate Professor at Stockholm University, pointed out that the crises over the past few years bring home the reality of escalating and devastating destruction, but also the shortcoming of national responses. “These crises show how interdependent we are and how crisis in one country can spill over into another. We need intensive, integrated, multi-level crisis management,” he said. “This is not an option. It is essential. Understanding crises and what the EU brings is important.”
THE EU’S GROWING ROLE IN PROTECTING POPULATIONS

Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, has been at the forefront of the European Commission’s Emergency Response and Coordination Centre (ERC) politically and institutionally. The ERC, which opened in May 2013, allows for a better coordinated, faster and more efficient response to natural and human-induced disasters in Europe and beyond. The ERC is a nexus for cooperation across institutions and Member States when disaster strikes. It is linked to the Joint Research Centre, which collects critical real-time data.

“The horizontal connectivity and the connectivity with Member States are enormously important for the ability to anticipate risks and to act very swiftly when we need to engage and to be there,” she said.

The recent typhoon in the Philippines tested the mettle of the EU’s response capabilities. The world’s most powerful ever-recorded typhoon hit on a Friday. The day before, the Commission mobilised Télécoms Sans Frontières to ensure communication was available when disaster hit the country. On Saturday, an assessment team arrived and a mobile hospital was quickly set up. Working closely with the United Nations, the EU’s coordinated response in the Philippines involved 16 teams and 20 Member States that immediately made funding commitments and provided 100 tonnes of supplies.

“Speed is of the essence. We have improved our response capabilities in terms of mobilisation and deployment”

“These analytical skills are also good for humanitarian crises. We have integrated civil protection and humanitarian response skills without undermining our key principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence,” Georgieva told participants. The EU’s Comprehensive Approach has been under construction for years, but with the creation of the fledgling European External Action Service (EEAS), the aspiration to apply a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and crisis management is becoming a reality. The Comprehensive Approach enables the EU to bring together and deploy all of the instruments available to respond to crises.

“The Comprehensive Approach makes it possible for the EU to step up to the plate as one Union,” Georgieva said. However, she warned that it is critical that this effort does not undermine humanitarian assistance by creating the perception that humanitarian aid is susceptible to political interference. Georgieva thus emphasised that DG ECHO will continue to stay “in but out”.

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Mali was another test for the EU as it pulled together to focus on security and humanitarian needs. Training Malian farmers to protect civilians and bringing health clinics and schools back into operation helped stabilise communities. By joining forces with development colleagues, the European Commission is investing in building resilience and resistance.

The EU’s Civil Protection Legislation was yet not approved by the European Parliament at the time for the Dialog. “It puts front and centre the need to understand our risks and capabilities,” Georgieva said.

The legislation has been revised to ensure a well-coordinated response to crises, and emphasises disaster prevention, risk management and disaster preparedness. The primary responsibility for disaster management remains with Member States. However, through risk mapping and gap analyses the EU can transition from ad hoc movement of assets to pre-committed assets, whether disaster strikes abroad or at home, according to Georgieva. The Commissioner also commented on the current situation in Syria. She stressed that the ongoing crisis in Syria needs a political solution, but unless it is stemmed, destabilisation could spill over to neighbouring countries.

“In the humanitarian community we have two scenarios. One is bad, one is worse,” Georgieva said. “We are desperate for the world to hear how much we are falling behind the needs to resolve this crisis for the Syrians and for the world.”

Moderator Magnus Ekengren, Associate Professor and Director of the European Security Research Programme at the Swedish National Defence College started by saying how grateful he was to the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) for its generous support of the research programme Building Societal Security in Europe – A roadmap towards enhanced transboundary crisis management capacity, and for its support to the Policy Dialogues. The Programme is led by the Defence College, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and Utrecht School of Governance. Ekengren suggested that the biggest added value of research perhaps lies in its contribution to the EU’s institutional memory and reminded speakers of their talks in the 2011 Policy Dialogue. Then Helena Lindberg underlined the need to find
ways of strengthening the generic capacity for coordination between EU institutions, policy-areas and levels of decision-making to avoid ad-hoc solutions. Ekengren asked whether an EU member state today – after requesting help from the EU – can feel assured that it will receive assistance from the EU pool of response capacities in times of domestic and transboundary crisis? In 2011 Agostino Miozzo pointed out that it was a future challenge to make the EU member states work together, as an orchestra, despite their different national interests and languages. Ekengren asked whether the member states, today, work together as an orchestra?

Agostino Miozzo, Managing Director for Crisis Response and Operational Cooperation at the European External Action Service answered that the EU still is not an orchestra with regard to EU on external actions, rather there are still many soloists. He continued with pointing out that crises in Syria and Libya are in Europe’s back yard.

“The Mediterranean Sea is a river and Libya is our neighbour. Do we need another 9/11 to boost the system and move faster?”

Miozzo referred to the EEAS as a “baby” with 28 mothers and fathers. “It is somewhat confused in the process of evolution, but the baby is growing fast and it is going in the right direction. However, we have a long way ahead with the major difficulties we are facing.”

Speakers agreed that the EU is strengthening its role as a crisis manager and has played a key role on the global stage by pushing the agenda forward in the area of disaster management and civil protection.

Miozzo noted that, internally, the “cultural pillar” needs to be overcome before the EU can fully appreciate the true potential of the Comprehensive Approach. “The Comprehensive Approach is the new mantra that will push us over the cultural pillar that we used to build the Union,” he said. “We need to work together. Mali was a success story and the beginning of the Comprehensive Approach, which performed well in a complex situation.”

Miozzo reminded participants that the Comprehensive Approach is about being efficient and effective in the field. “At field level, we need to give continuity,” he said. He pointed to the need for a culture of crisis management within the system.

“There are enormous capacities and high quality competences together with an enormous amount of resources that can really make a difference if we work together in a well-coordinated manner.”
REINFORCING COORDINATION AT HOME

On Ekengren’s question whether the EU member states today can feel assured of EU assistance, Helena Lindberg, Director-General of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, answered Yes! The Civil Protection Legislation is a “strong basis for a more ambitious European disaster management” response, said Helena Lindberg. The Comprehensive Approach is “a big step forward” in providing a map of the European risk landscape. “This will not happen overnight due to the levels of maturity in different Member States, but this is the right approach,” she told participants. “When we reach 2020, we will have a much better understanding of where we have our weak spots and how we can manage them.”

The European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP) sets the framework for maintaining vital societal functions in the event of natural disasters, criminal activity, terrorism and other accidents. Regular exchanges among Member States will ensure an all-hazards, cross-sectoral approach when disaster strikes.

“Member States are encouraged to look beyond their own borders, analyse interdependencies and possible cascading effects spreading across critical systems.”

“There is great potential for establishing enhanced collaboration on these issues - at EU level – across DG’s – and also at national level,” Lindberg added. Sweden supports implementing the Solidarity Clause, which is a legal obligation for the EU and Member States to assist each other when disaster or terrorism strikes.

Florika Fink-Hooijer, Director for Strategy, Policy and International Cooperation in the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection at the European Commission, agreed that the arsenal of tools and communications mechanisms has been “stepped up”. She mentioned all the different tools that the EU have at disposal for external actions, e.g. civilian missions; border management; police missions, rule-of-law missions, the battle group, sanctions, humanitarian aid, development aid, and financial instruments but stressed that while the right tools exist, it is important to be pragmatic and realistic when taking stock.

“As a union comprised of 28 Member States, we have a long way to go in terms of political will and strategic oversight. We must be humble and recognise that we facilitate and coordinate. Civil protection is a good example as we don’t have a good competence there.”
Also important is that although the EU is better prepared for extreme weather events, it is not prepared for the huge accompanying economic losses. The ERC is good example of how the EU can work together both inside and outside the Union. “We have to think of more innovative approaches, including looking differently at refugees and internally displaced persons,” Fink-Hooijer argued.

“We need to do this more often and in a more assertive manner. We have achieved a lot that we can bring to the international arena.”

She also called for the EU to be more assertive at global level to set standards and good practices.

Magnus Ekengren asked speakers whether a “new security community” has evolved, which is the achievement of a space where EU Member States are integrated enough to assist each other at home and abroad. As all the speakers confirmed this hypothesis there was now time for research to define this new type of European security community for transboundary crisis. The traditional security community had been defined by Karl Deutsch as ‘a group of people integrated to the point where there is a real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other ways’ (Deutsch et al. 1957: 6). Ekengren suggested that the new type of security community might in the light of the speakers’ interventions be defined as ‘a group of people that is integrated to the point where there is real assurance that the members of that community will assist each other to protect the basic functions of society and government (democratic institutions) and the civilian population, at home and abroad’. That would mean that we are taken from a European security community to a secure European community (society), Ekengren said.

Erik Windmar, Member of the Cabinet of European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström, answered that progress has been made on an internal security strategy, but much work remains to be done. One of the four pillars is civil protection, together with border security, cyber threats and terrorism. Progress made on border security issues is viewed by Member States as a “strong value added”. Frontex promotes, coordinates and develops European border management in line with the concept of Integrated Border Management.
Frontex has been working with Italian authorities in Lampedusa since October, when more than 300 people died there in a shipwreck. The disaster dramatically symbolised the plight of migrants seeking a new life. In response to the deaths, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmström called for the EU to increase Mediterranean-wide search and rescue patrols to intercept migrant boats through Frontex.

The European Commission is directing considerable resources in the fight against cybercrime. Windmar described the challenges as enormous and elusive. “It is a threat we are still trying to figure out how to approach,” he said. “The sky is the limit on what could happen.” For example, it is not that difficult to take down the air control system, but what is the best joint response? Nuclear power plants scattered across the European landscape are another huge challenge. Member States are reluctant to have the European Commission enter the field of nuclear security. Issues of jurisdiction and coordination are complex. When the European Cybercrime Centre was set up at Europol, the directors of Europol and the European Network and Information Security Agency did not meet for three years.

Terrorism is one of the most difficult areas to work in. “This is a matter of national security and goes to the heart of the Member States. Operational forces can work together but nationally and at the policy level, it is much more difficult,” he said.

“We have not yet had the terrorist attack we are mentally preparing for.”

Most important is the issue of trust, Windmar added. “We need to focus on the right things, find out what added value the Commission can bring and do it well. That way the Member States will support you.”

Overcoming the “stovepipe mentality” is paramount, said Lindberg. She added that “Decision makers need to understand that we are late and there is a sense of urgency.”

Fink-Hooijer commented on the role of technology. She said that; “My concern is that we are over-dependent on technology. All of our crises systems are dependent on telecommunication linking to satellites.”

A way forward could be to tap in the technology-driven approach used by the private sector. Technology and innovation are sure to be focus areas at the first ever World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul in 2016.
PREPARING FOR FUTURE CHALLENGES

Georgieva pointed out that 80% of natural disasters are climate related, stressing that it is “too late the reverse, but not too late to minimize” this trend. She noted that the EU is no longer in the lead in developing aggressive policies to counter climate change. “We are not reducing our ambition, but we aren’t lifting it up either,” meaning that the EU has lost its lead in this field. “We need to pursue international dialogue, but also pursue other initiatives.” The recent initiative unveiled at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Warsaw involving 414 cities that committed to 4,000 actions to do their part in battling climate change by 2020 is an example. Some of the actions have already been launched.

Georgieva noted that unfolding crises at the EU’s borders and the potential for disaster to strike inside the Union will require the following:

- “Think the unthinkable” to anticipate new unknown threats and to prepare and train for the disasters of the future.
- Collaborate with the private sector – there is untapped creativity in this synergy.
- Work to make the international community more capable of foresight and more connected to the politics of development and humanitarian action in the most fragile environments.


“We have done quite a lot when we look in the rear-view mirror. But in the future, more dramatic natural events and more complex human-induced crises means our job is not done.”