

Non-Paper: Need for strategic decisions on CSDP Missions and Operations

European leaders have made a clear commitment to take more responsibility for Europe's own security and to be prepared to act and deal more autonomously with immediate and future challenges. The current security environment constitutes a severe challenge for the European Union. Therefore, it is imperative that the EU and its Member States not only increase deterrence, but also use all instruments of the Common Security and Defence Policy to contribute directly and effectively to our common security.

Military and Civilian CSDP Missions and Operations are a visible, unique and relevant instrument to respond to external threats that present a high risk of spill-over into Europe and to the increasing strategic competition in our neighbourhood. But if Member States want to use the full potential of CSDP Missions for those purposes, we need to be more strategic and more decisive on where to deploy, to what end and when it is time to make adjustments. Resources are inherently limited and we cannot afford to continue engagements that lack impact or do not align with the EU's strategic security objectives. For CSDP Missions and Operations to rise to this challenge, Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and the Netherlands believe it is essential to realign CSDP Missions and Operations with the EU's strategic security objectives¹, to ensure executable mandates, to recommit capabilities to match our political ambitions in the field of security and defence and to be bolder in adjusting our presence where needed.

Refocus on the EU's strategic security objectives, particularly in its immediate neighbourhood

Major developments in the security landscape should lead to a strategic prioritization of CSDP Missions and Operations. Given the fact that resources are finite, deployment of Missions and Operations should be focused on the EU's strategic security objectives, particularly in its immediate neighbourhood, and address challenges which are a direct threat to the EU. Such prioritization does not exclude other types of 'light footprint' CSDP engagements.

>> Recommendation: Focus CSDP Missions and Operations on strategic security objectives and on the immediate neighbourhood of the EU.

Realism through focused and results-oriented mandates

Intervening in complex conflict zones requires increased realism about the results we can expect from a CSDP Mission or Operation. Therefore, it is important that they have executable mandates, a clear intervention logic and a precise and achievable end state. This also requires a frank assessment of the buy-in and tangible ownership from partner countries.

>> Recommendation: Ensure executable mandates with clear operational objectives and avoid unnecessary broadening of the scope.

Recommit capabilities to match political ambitions

Capability shortages are hampering the effectiveness of several of our CSDP Missions and Operations. Ambitions without the necessary resources to achieve them are meaningless and stronger commitments from all Member States are needed. Given that resources are inherently finite, allocation should be aligned with the EU's strategic security objectives and be focused on those Missions and Operations with the highest impact.

>> Recommendation: Make force sensing a mandatory part of decision-making, including when extending mandates.

Rightsizing by scaling up, scaling down or closing down

If effective mandate implementation is no longer possible and the desired end state does not come

¹ e.g. Strategic Compass, Preparedness Union Strategy, ProtectEU, Defence White Paper.

any closer, Member States should face this sometimes uncomfortable truth by adjusting the Mission or Operation: scaling up, scaling down, or preparing a transition and/or closure. Maintaining a visible EU footprint in a partner country can never be the only basis to maintain a CSDP Mission or Operation. Honest appraisal of progress towards the desired end state in mission reports as well as impact evaluations are important tools to support rightsizing.

>> Recommendation: Member States must be able to take difficult, bold decisions and adjust a Mission or Operation when effective mandate implementation is no longer possible.

Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania and the Netherlands underline the need to strengthen and reshape CSDP Missions and Operations to meet today's realities and security challenges. A renewed commitment to effective CSDP interventions will reinforce the importance of our Missions and Operations as part of the EU's overall ambitions in the field of preparedness, security and defence.