

Dealing with the Human Factor: Conflict Prevention and Civilian CSDP¹

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Executive Summary

Conflict prevention is often singled out as a priority of the European Union's external action and policies and the potential for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations to engage in conflict prevention is laid down in Article 43 of the Lisbon Treaty (2007). Yet, prevention in the context of civilian CSDP missions has not really materialised. Aside from well-known obstacles of technical capacity, resources, structures and EU Member State interests, there are additional aspects that deserve attention in order to understand why conflict prevention has lagged behind. These aspects relate to the 'human factor', which describes 1) different interpretations of what conflict prevention is and what it is for, and 2) the gap between policy and practice due to differing priorities or emphases among CSDP actors in the course of implementation.

Ultimately, designing, planning and deploying a civilian CSDP mission that seeks to contribute to preventing conflict means that those involved need to be aligned on fundamental questions about mission design and effectiveness such as: What violence / conflict are we trying to prevent? By whom? Against whom? Which specific conflict dynamic(s) is our mission aiming to transform? How and why will our activities be successful in changing behaviour or outcomes? What does successful conflict prevention look like? Yet, interpretations of conflict prevention can differ. They differ in terms of timeframe: from short-term containment to long-term peace; in terms of whose security is targeted: from state-centric to people-centred security; in terms of end goals: from the prevention of violent acts to the transformation of negative conflict dynamics; and in terms of primary motivation: from EU internal / domestic interests to outward-looking global responsibility. Given the variety of ways in which the EU has referenced conflict prevention over the years, it would not be surprising if a spectrum of interpretations exists among staff involved in civilian CSDP.

¹ This report is part of a wider EU-CIVCAP Deliverable by the same authors, DL 3.3: 'Reports on integrating conflict prevention in CSDP, EU trade policy and EU development policy', available from: <https://eu-civcap.net/portfolio/deliverables/>. The EU-CIVCAP project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no.: 653227.

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Furthermore, it is almost inevitable that individual experiences, belief-systems or cognitive heuristics (shortcuts) will influence interpretation and implementation of mandates. Civilian CSDP is ultimately driven by individuals and groups of individuals from across different EU actors and structures. Foreign policy analysis methods draw on political psychology and sociology to probe decision-making and the influence of individual characteristics, beliefs, experiences, and emotions. And, although this is most often discussed with regard to high-level decision-makers, there is no reason to suppose that it would not also apply to staff involved in the steps between CSDP mandate design and deployment, and during implementation.

One cannot ignore that ‘human factors’ are likely to determine how different civilian CSDP actors approach conflict prevention in their work. On the contrary, it calls for much greater attention from policymakers and academics on how this manifests and what can be done to harness the diversity of CSDP actors to promote effective and coherent approaches to conflict prevention within civilian CSDP missions. This paper aims to contribute to a discussion and puts forward some recommendations and policy considerations arising from the research to address understanding and heterogeneity of opinion on conflict prevention within the context of civilian CSDP.

Considerations and policy recommendations

1. To achieve added value for prevention and to avoid blind spots, EU conflict analysis that feeds into civilian CSDP missions should cover a broad scope of dynamics, stakeholders and root causes and examine a range of sectors, including input from non-elite and local level perspectives.
2. The definition of objectives and the planning for civilian CSDP missions should be explicit about exactly which dynamic and risk of violence is being targeted by the mission activities, how different conflict stakeholders will position themselves in relation to the mission, and involve a critical reflection on how and why will the mission activities be successful in overcoming the obstacles of the context in order to transform that dynamic or risk.
3. To enhance the translation of prevention into operational guidance, civilian CSDP operational plans (OPLANs) should connect key points from the conflict analysis specifically with the roles and tasks foreseen for a civilian CSDP prevention engagement.
4. In order to address biases and differing interpretations, EU conflict analysis should use participatory analysis methods as standard practice to promote more cohesive understanding (rather than just imparting knowledge) across relevant civilian CSDP staff.
5. In order to address biases and differing interpretations, EU conflict prevention actors should use training methods and tools that emphasise exchange and cooperation, which creates the opportunity to bring individual ‘human factors’ out into the open; drawing on rather than downplaying the different backgrounds and profiles among trainees.

1. Introduction

Conflict prevention is often singled out as a priority of the European Union's (EU) external action and policies. Commitments to prevent conflict have been reasonably consistent for over 15 years, from the 2001 EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (Göteborg Programme) to the 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The oft-cited Article 21(c) of the Lisbon Treaty (2007) frames the EU's constitutional responsibility to prevent conflict while the EUGS (2016) requires all aspects of EU external engagement to take conflict prevention into account (European Union, 2016: 48), listing early prevention as one of five overarching priorities for the "Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises" (European Union, 2016: 9). The potential for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations to engage in conflict prevention is established in Article 43 of the Lisbon Treaty (2007). Yet, prevention in the context of civilian CSDP missions has not really materialised and thus far, the debate has been avoided as most missions have stuck to a (post-)crisis, state building role.

Aside from well-known obstacles of technical capacity, resources, structures and EU Member State interests, there are additional aspects that deserve attention in order to understand why conflict prevention has lagged behind. These aspects relate to the 'human factor', which describes 1) different interpretations of what conflict prevention is and what it is for, and 2) the gap between policy and practice due to differing priorities or emphases among CSDP actors in the course of implementation. The first challenge is topical in light of the 2017 review of civilian CSDP 'the Feira' priorities,³ which is taking place amid a public and political discourse occupied with EU border control and EU internal security. The second challenge is longstanding as it is inherent to the multinational, multi-layered, multi-stakeholder, and intergovernmental nature of decision-making around CSDP.

It cannot be presumed that all EU stakeholders and actors will share an understanding of what prevention is and what it is for. Interpretations can differ; in terms of timeframe: from short-term containment to "sustainable peace" (European Union, 2016: 10); in terms of whose security is targeted: from state-centric to people-centred security; in terms of end goals: from the prevention of violent acts to the transformation of negative conflict dynamics; and in terms of primary motivation: from EU internal / domestic interests to outward-looking global responsibility. This research is taking place as the Implementation Plan for Security and Defence arising from the EUGS (2016) is being followed up; the review of civilian CSDP 'Feira' priorities is underway and capacity

³ Four main priorities for civilian CSDP: police, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection.

building in support of security and development (CBSD) is increasing the scope for support to military actors in partner countries. Viewed together, this may signal a shift towards the end of the spectrum focused on state-centric security. The contemporary trend in the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is discussed by many as the EU securitisation agenda (Sheriff *et al.*, 2017; Furness and Gänzle, 2012; Nyheim, 2015; Nyheim *et al.*, 2017). By contrast, early EU initiatives on prevention promoted human security, for example, in the Göteborg Programme (2001) and thinking by the first High Representative, Javier Solana, during the formative years of EU-CFSP (Solana, 2005). Human security was defined by the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities as the EU contribution "to the protection of every individual human being and not only on the defence of the Union's borders" (Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities, 2004: 11). Given the different perspectives on the goal of prevention that the EU has espoused over the years, it is likely that a variety of interpretations might be found across missions, units, hierarchical levels and even individual staff involved in civilian CSDP.

In relation to the second challenge of individual interpretation and action, it is tempting to conclude that developing an EU definition of conflict prevention would solve any issue of divergent views among staff involved in civilian CSDP. However, it is worth considering that the hundreds of individual staff and numerous sub-groups engaged in civilian CSDP will always be influenced by more than just policy documents or guidelines. This is a reality faced by most large, multi-national organisations and essentially demonstrates the difficulty of designing structures, processes and a working culture that will support the coherent implementation of an organisation's vision. While conflict analysis is promoted as a useful way to generate a shared understanding based on broad and deep analysis of conflict contexts, setting out the conflict dynamics, root causes and stakeholders on paper may not be sufficient to determine what civilian CSDP should focus on with regard to prevention. It is still possible that despite the conclusions of a conflict analysis, individual psychological, cultural and sociological preferences and beliefs – 'human factors' – might influence the way that different CSDP staff interpret the context and implement preventive action. Therefore, in looking at the role of conflict analysis in support of enhanced civilian CSDP preventive engagement, it is also necessary to consider what type of conflict analysis could best address such challenges.⁴

For the most part, psychological, cultural and sociological influences on CSDP occupy a more marginal space in EU foreign policy analysis. Although high level MS politics and the formal capacities of the institutions are valuable subjects of analysis to explain challenges around CSDP, it is incomplete without also addressing psychological, cultural

⁴ The term 'conflict analysis' is often used loosely to describe a variety of products from geopolitical analysis, reporting from capitals on government or elite actors, headquarters-based intelligence reports, quantitative data tools or analytical workshops.

and sociological influences. Cross-cutting cleavages exist, ranging from the multiplicity of foreign policy interests of the 28 Member States (MS), to the different policy objectives and working cultures of the related EU institutions and bodies. Civilian CSDP is ultimately driven by individuals and groups of individuals from those structures that can and should be analysed. In other words, we need to challenge the idea that any member state – or EU institution or body – acts as a unified, cohesive whole that will implement policy in a unified, coherent way. In light of the unavoidable variation among individuals, departments, or other sub-groups, the question becomes, how to overcome obstacles that relate to human, and not just technical or political, factors.

In an effort to complement existing academic and policy research on civilian CSDP, this research will explore whether individual variation of opinion – ‘human’ – factors are a valid consideration with regard to the capabilities of civilian CSDP for preventing conflict and contributing to sustainable peace. The paper is structured into the following parts: section (2) will elaborate on interpretations of conflict prevention and the significance for civilian CSDP scope, purpose and beneficiaries; (3) will give an overview of some of the human factors that are associated with more psychological, cultural and sociological approaches to foreign policy analysis; section (4) will introduce the framework for examining the human factor in civilian CSDP, presenting the opinion survey methodology and providing an overview of the selected survey indicators. The results and analysis section (5) will present the headline results from the opinion survey and what this signifies in terms of interpretations of conflict prevention. Finally, the conclusions (6) summarise the main messages from the research study and offer a few key overarching policy considerations in light of the research findings.

2. Conflict Prevention and Civilian CSDP: Scope, Purpose, Beneficiaries

Designing, planning and deploying a civilian CSDP mission that seeks to contribute to preventing conflict means being prepared to address fundamental questions about mission design and effectiveness, such as, what violence / conflict are we trying to prevent? By whom? Against whom? Which specific conflict dynamic(s) is our mission aiming to transform? How and why will our activities be successful in changing behaviour or outcomes? What does successful conflict prevention look like? Although this may be dismissed as unnecessarily pedantic by some EU policymakers, there are operational and reputational consequences to presuming that the EU’s priorities for prevention are the same as the priorities of those affected by the conflict. For example, a “migration-sensitive” (European Union, 2016: 50) civilian CSDP mission may well preempt violence and yield immediate benefits for EU internal interests while being at odds with protecting the long-term peace and security of populations in the country. If civilian

CSDP missions provide support to state security actors or regimes that are part of the conflict problem, or if preventive engagement is only prioritised in areas that reflect the EU's own interests or the government-defined national security interests, the EU's credibility in championing a conflict prevention agenda could be undermined. In order to differentiate the EU approach to conflict prevention policy from the EU's internal security policy, migration policy or crisis management approach, answering the questions of what type of security and whose security is being prioritised is collectively an important first step to defining what successful civilian CSDP prevention would look like.

What peace?

The EU's own repeated and high-profile rhetorical references to peace signal publicly that peace is the desired goal of engagement in conflict-affected settings (European Union, 2016: 10; Mogherini, 2017a; Mogherini, 2017b; Mogherini, 2017c). The continued reiteration of peace implies that the EU recognises the need to address structural injustices and attitudes that feed violence as well as the direct physical violence in order to achieve peace, which is one of the most basic concepts in peace studies (Galtung, 1996). What Galtung (1969) termed positive peace and what Lederach (1997) saw as the necessity to transform conflict dynamics and relationships that drive or sustain violence is therefore invoked as context for EU conflict prevention when the EU talks about root causes and sustainable peace (European Commission, 2016a). Yet, awareness of conflict and peacebuilding theory is almost invisible in EU discourse around conflict prevention. In contrast, coercive security, military-centred approaches, traditional diplomacy and covert operations have been the default tools of foreign policy actors for hundreds of years. Given peacebuilding's far shorter history in the policy world (Sheriff *et al.*, 2017), its influence on CSDP staff and MS and its footprint in their discussions on conflict prevention is likely to be much lighter. This is unfortunate as it could prove strategically and operationally valuable. Decision-makers and politicians that are struggling to track, anticipate and respond to the complexity of conflicts could find the broad and deep analysis espoused by those working explicitly on peace to be useful.⁵ Ignoring any piece of the conflict puzzle or any stakeholder risks the failure or ineffectiveness of prevention efforts. Armed with a wider and deeper analysis, responses are less likely to suffer from omissions and blind spots, especially in spotting risks emerging from non-state, non-elite or localised dynamics, such as the structural

⁵ Analysis with sustainable peace in mind is complex, by necessity. It has to incorporate the root causes of conflicts in a variety of sectors and the role and agency of parallel and overlapping political, linguistic, ethnic, socioeconomic, subnational and regional groups.

violence against women and girls (Davis, 2017). Sustainable peace is not just an expression of values, but a strategic framework for mapping, anticipating and navigating complexity in conflict contexts.

What security?

Most of the current civilian CSDP missions focus on capacity-building around rule of law and security sector reform, organised crime, counter-terrorism and border management, anti-piracy or the management of illegal migration (Tardy, 2016). To a large extent, civilian CSDP missions have steered clear of explicit conflict prevention engagement and instead focused on building state capacities and national security priorities. A previous policy paper on civilian CSDP by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (2013) questioned whether this focus on support to formal (i.e. state) institutions and bodies within the security sector, judiciary, public administration would be effective in delivering improved security “in the eyes of different groups within a society (for instance men and women) [which] may have very different perceptions” (EPLO, 2013: 4). This view is also reflected in the guiding principles set out for civilian CSDP mission staff in the 2017 ENTRi Handbook, which calls for “security policy concepts and needs to be orientated toward the survival, security and development of individual human beings” (ENTRi, 2017: 102).

Though the EUGS (2016) is clear about the complexity and decentralisation of conflicts and crises, the recent Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (2016) is still heavy on references to functions of the state despite this representing a top-down, centralised approach and despite the fact that (parts of) the state can, and often do, play problematic roles in most conflict contexts. A civilian CSDP prevention approach that focused on building the capacity of state institutions would carry the implicit assumption that those actors were a) best placed and b) willing to prevent the violence and insecurity facing different population groups. The argument that state security actors are automatically legitimate partners for civilian CSDP because they are mandated to address violence makes civilian CSDP a state-building tool rather than a conflict response. It promotes the monopoly of force of the state regardless of the actual role of those actors in the conflict dynamics. While the aims of state-building and conflict prevention are not necessarily incompatible, the argument that building the capacity of state security actors is equivalent to preventing conflict or building peace lacks credibility if a third country government is visibly and repeatedly seen as disregarding or threatening their own population. Robust conflict analysis that incorporates the perspectives of various cross-sections of the population is therefore a good way to establish if that assumption holds true or not.

The ‘what is security’ debate is also revealing of a deeper conceptual divide. When it comes to the discussion of conflict responses, preventing violence, peacebuilding or people-centred approaches tend to be stereotyped in gendered ways as soft, idealistic (Kaldor, cited in Martin & Kaldor, 2010: 166), altruistic, and better suited to civilian capabilities. At the other end of the scale lies ‘hard’ security, which focuses on the stereotypically male-dominated domains of military and uniformed security actors; the reinforcement of the state’s monopoly of force; and its rational authority. There is a clear gender dimension in these assumptions, both in the perpetuation of gendered stereotypes and in the pre-eminence of stereotypically ‘masculine’ approaches.⁶ Even the EUGS (2016) propagates this gendered divide, declaring that “[t]he European Union has always prided itself on its soft power” but then carefully distances itself from the “the idea that Europe is an exclusively ‘civilian power” (European Union, 2016: 4). The fact that this is rarely discussed or challenged has its own risks (Stern, 2011), as it produces a policy context where a default preference for ‘masculine’ traditional security activities and engaging in one or two narrow fields of conflict has somehow been established as the pragmatic approach in civilian CSDP. Given the complexity and decentralised nature of conflicts, a peacebuilding lens on dynamics, relationships and root causes would, in fact, represent the more logical approach to prevention mandates. It may represent a missed opportunity for the EU to advance more sophisticated, nuanced and effective responses to conflicts and crises.

Whose security?

Questions persist about whether CSDP missions are designed and deployed for the benefit of (populations in) third countries or whether they are primarily a tool for the EU’s own common security and defence. At a strategic level, those two ends appear to be superficially consistent and they can, and often do, intersect. However, at a planning and operational level, this consistency can falter as decisions are taken and choices made about which sector to engage in, which geographic location, which beneficiary / body to support and ultimately, how success will be measured. EU-CIVCAP report DL 2.1 noted the difference in (technological) resources available for conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities versus defence and intelligence (De Zan *et al.*, 2016) while Rodt has written on the problem that the interests of the intervener often overtake the interests of the target in the framing of policy documents (Rodt, 2014). In the translation from mandate, to crisis management concept (CMC) to Operational Plans (OPLAN) and deployment, choices will inevitably end up reflecting one goal more than another.

⁶ Indeed, in the ‘Feira priorities’ of civilian CSDP the only reference to civilians is related to their protection, rather than their potential agency as contributors to security.

Therefore, defining whose security is guiding the EU's engagement is fundamental to defining prevention.

EU-CIVCAP report DL 2.1 on procedures, personnel and technologies also noted the risk to the credibility of civilian CSDP missions where national interests of individual MS appear to take precedence (De Zan *et al.*, 2016). The same holds true for the emphasis on the EU's own security interests, which come with practical and political consequences. The 2017 ENTRi Handbook cautions that international actors can cause damage by "articulating or promoting their interests and priorities too vigorously", leading to perceptions of bias that can unintentionally be detrimental to a conflict (ENTRi, 2017: 108). Glossing over the main security concerns of populations or insensitivity to the social, political, economic, regional and other dynamics of the conflict can have negative consequences for the EU. The EU's own Staff Handbook on Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility lists some of the consequences of conflict insensitivity as: "putting staff and partners at risk; putting investments at risk and wasting time and resources; undermining the achievement of intervention objectives; damaging the EU's reputation locally and globally." (European Commission, 2014: 9). In addition, it creates the uncomfortable impression that the EU is making a distinction between what constitutes security inside the EU for European populations – requiring accountability to populations and attentiveness to community and personal security – and what constitutes security for populations outside the EU (EPLO, 2013): a top-down approach, focused on strengthening state monopoly of force. This interpretation of security would leave civilian CSDP missions (and the EU more broadly) open to critiques from a postcolonial perspective.

In the wider context of EU CFSP and external action, references to peace are increasingly outnumbered by references to the securitisation agenda (Sheriff *et al.*, 2017; Furness and Gänzle, 2012; Nyheim, 2015; Nyheim *et al.*, 2017). This sets the tone for the contemporary policy debate about civilian CSDP and conflict prevention. Not all activities labelled as conflict prevention, especially if they are oriented toward EU security or national security agendas of third country governments, are automatically conducive to human security or sustainable peace. If short-term or EU internal objectives dominate the analysis of the conflict problem and solution, this will affect the ability of civilian CSDP to effectively engage in preventing conflict. This would be especially true if such approaches led to a redistribution of civilian CSDP resources and political attention away from move outward-looking objectives of human security and peace.

3. Human Factors and Civilian CSDP

As noted in the introduction, the importance of individuals should not be underestimated, especially in introducing and promoting innovation in bureaucratic environments. Tardy cites “personality-related obstacles” as one of a variety of influences that hinder systematic and uniform implementation of EU policy (2015: 28-29). On the establishment of gender, peace and security policies in the EU, Deiana and McDonagh observed that progress was largely due to the “vision and advocacy of individual policy-makers rather than the initiative or procedures of institutions” (2017: 3), and that “interactions, networks, individual interpretations and decisions” count (Deiana and McDonagh, 2017: 4). Political psychology acknowledges the bias that decision-makers apply when faced with new information that challenges long-held beliefs (Huddy *et al.*, 2013: 9). It is almost inevitable that individual experiences, belief-systems or cognitive heuristics (shortcuts) will influence interpretation and implementation. Foreign policy analysis methods draw on such political psychology and sociology to probe decision-making, with pioneers such as Jervis (1976) writing on the individual characteristics, beliefs, experiences, and emotions of decision-makers, and the work of Janis (1972) on the dynamics of group decision-making in foreign policy. Although this is most often discussed with regard to high-level decision-makers, there is no reason to suppose that it would not also apply to staff involved in the steps between CSDP mandate design and deployment, and during implementation. Despite this, political psychology and sociology is still a much smaller proportion of EU policy research and analysis, with important exceptions such as the work of Chelotti (2016); Carta (2012); Mérand (2012); Faure (2017) and Juncos and Pomorska (2014). In the realm of EU security and defence scholarship, rationalism and analysis of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism still tend to dominate (Howorth, 2014: 204).

Institutional cultures and the socialisation process that happens among networks of professionals within institutional structures are important layers of influence to consider. In the case of CSDP, Tardy highlights the “multiple working methods, institutional cultures and degrees of politicisation” (2015: 28-29). Faleg’s (2017) work on learning communities in CSDP reinforces the idea that the existence of prior, shared foundations of practice and professional habits are significant. This reflects Haas’s (1992) earlier framing of epistemic communities. The multi-stakeholder nature of CSDP decision-making and implementation means that organisations and groups are likely to develop sub-cultures aligned with their institutional and/or epistemic communities. Recognising this influence is necessary to challenge what Ness and Brechin referred to as the dismissal of intergovernmental organisations as “mechanical tools obediently doing the work of their creators” (1988: 247). Moreover, Allison’s (1969) Bureaucratic

Politics Model would suggest that this may result in a high degree of bargaining across, and also within (Davis, 2014) institutional structures.

Up to now, political will, resource allocation and MS national interests feature heavily in analysis as the dominant obstacles to collective decision-making and action for CSDP in general. The various levels of influence and approaches to CSDP engagement by different MS is well-documented, such as France's focus on francophone regions and parallel deployment in Mali (De Zan *et al.*, 2016). While some research on a shared "strategic culture" at EU level suggests there are a growing number of common norms, values and beliefs among the national representatives working in Brussels (Biava, 2011), most analysts argue that national strategic cultures continue to outweigh these developments (Haesebrouck, 2016). Nonetheless, the influence of nationality may be broader, for example due to differences in training and education in the diplomatic corps (Tardy, 2015) or the exaggeration of national influences outside a national setting. For example, Brante *et al* (2011: 22) noted that attitudes toward early warning information actually differed to a larger degree in multinational settings than in national settings. Given the multi-national context of civilian CSDP and imbalances in MS representation discussed in EU CIVCAP DL 4.1 (Dijkstra *et al.*, 2016), there are a variety of dimensions to national influences on the interpretations and approaches of individual CSDP actors, including perspectives on conflict prevention.

Finally, the question of military and civilian culture must be noted. As many of the planners, even for civilian CSDP missions, tend to come from military backgrounds (EPLO, 2013: 10), the influence of those cultures is relevant. In the first instance, the (gendered) perspectives on military versus civilian engagement noted earlier may lead some civilian CSDP actors to place a higher value on activities associated with force and authority. This could manifest itself tangibly in terms of levels of personal commitment to conflict prevention tasks in a civilian CSDP mission, for example, viewing tasks relating to human security as lower priority or relationships outside of the state security actors as less relevant. However, it is important to avoid stereotyping military actors by also considering how national military culture can differ. The complexity of strategic culture and the nexus between ideas and behaviour has been well-elaborated by Gray (1999). Dandeker and Gow (2004) have written on national military cultures that identify with peacekeeping mandates versus those that align with more traditional soldiering roles. Depending on the MS, seconded staff may view certain prevention roles in a civilian CSDP mission as fully aligned with their career track or as an obligation without prestige or value for career advancement back in their national military service or administration. This can also apply to uniformed civilians, such as police, judges, or border guards.

Considering the possible psychological, cultural and sociological influences discussed in the section and the heterogeneity of actors involved in civilian CSDP, taking the time to examine the variety of opinions around conflict prevention is at least as important as analysing EU intergovernmental relations, formal policy frameworks, institutional structures and resources for civilian CSDP.⁷

4. The context of security sector development/reform

Building a common cultural and cognitive foundation is not just a question of institutionalising shared processes, but also of fostering a sense of allegiance, identity and belonging, which can be translated into *esprit de corps*. This is understood by Juncos and Pomorska as “the emergence of shared beliefs and values among the individuals within a group and their desire to achieve a common goal” (2014: 302). With this in mind, this research aims to inspire a greater focus on micro-level factors in foreign policy, political psychology and sociology in civilian CSDP research to broaden and complement existing findings. Analysing the variation and opinions of civilian CSDP actors on issues around conflict prevention may generate different types of recommendations for a common vision on conflict prevention for civilian CSDP. As noted at the start, challenges arise from the potentially differing interpretations on conflict prevention, and the human factors influencing civilian CSDP staff. Therefore, the goal was twofold: to examine the heterogeneity among a small sample of CSDP staff in terms of their opinions on EU principles linked to conflict prevention. The principles and practices featured in the survey were sourced from a number of EU policies, guidelines and commitments that represent the EU’s track record of a more expansive interpretation of conflict prevention. In theory, one might presume that these ideas, sourced from EU documentation, represented agreed principles or standard practices amongst EU stakeholders. By collecting personal opinions from a variety of staff that work on and in civilian CSDP, the research sought to find out whether opinions diverge in practice.

4.1 Survey Framework

A small sample survey method was selected to explore the individual responses and variations of opinion among participants, particularly as these opinions related to

⁷ Civilian CSDP capabilities are analysed in a number of EU-CIVCAP reports: <https://eu-civcap.net/portfolio/deliverables/> in addition to other EU-funded Horizon2020 research projects such as: Improving the Effectiveness of Capabilities in EU Conflict Prevention (IECEU), Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP), and EUNPACK.

principles or practices elaborated in 'EU' policies, guidelines or commitments. The methodology included fixed questions and multiple choice answers to survey the opinions of a variety of stakeholders in a more structured and comparable way than through separate interviews. In addition to the multiple choice parts, respondents were also given the opportunity to include narrative text to present their opinions on which political or organisational factors would be most important for the success of a civilian CSDP mission designed to prevent conflict. Existing EU policy principles or practices were selected to form the basis of the opinion survey of various staff working on civilian CSDP from a variety of parts of the EU. Each respondent was presented with the statements presented below and asked to give their opinion on the EU's current realisation of these principles or practices (i.e. does this represent contemporary reality?). The survey was not designed to elicit which human factors were shaping their opinions as there will almost never be a single influencing factor for individual or group beliefs.⁸ The 36 respondents were also asked to give their opinion on the importance on the same factor in terms of how it contributes to civilian CSDP missions achieving a positive impact in a conflict context. The following paragraphs present the selected factors, and describe their link to conflict prevention.

1. **The EU is a global actor.** This statement is drawn from the 2009 Council of the European Union Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities. The implication being that, if the EU is perceived as a global actor that is consistent in its conflict engagements (as opposed to being perceived as engaging only when and where it serves its own interests), EU actors and tools may have more entry points and credibility to engage in conflict prevention. Moreover, as a global actor, the EU may be less beholden to a limited set of diplomatic partners and more able to cooperate with and leverage relationships with a variety partners, positioning itself to pursue conflict (prevention) responses that address the complexity of multi-level conflict dynamics.
2. **The EU has a strong role to play in preventing and managing conflicts, and addressing their causes.** This statement is drawn from the 2015 Council Conclusions on CSDP. It implies a proactive position on CSDP. Although proactive engagement in conflict situations does not necessarily indicate an outward-looking view of global politics and foreign relations, it does provide insight into levels of ambition and views on the limits of civilian CSDP mandates. As civilian CSDP has not yet formally held a conflict prevention mandate, this is relevant to understanding willingness to strengthen this capacity.

⁸ These will always reflect a coexistence of multiple identities, sub-cultures and experiences.

3. **The EU is generally seen as a credible and ethical actor in situations of instability and conflict.** This statement is drawn from the 2009 Council of the European Union Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities. In complex multi-actor conflict contexts, this would mean that the EU would need to enjoy credibility among a variety of different types of conflict stakeholder in order to be able to engage effectively. The question on whether this is *generally* held or limited to certain contexts is relevant. Yet, conflict actors are likely to assess EU credibility not only in their own context, but also in terms of how the EU acts and positions itself in other conflict contexts, hence the relevance of looking at general perceptions.
4. **CSDP provides the EU with operational capacity to undertake conflict prevention, peace-making and peace-keeping tasks.** This statement is drawn from the Lisbon Treaty (2007). It indicates the potential for a civilian CSDP mandate beyond the assumptions of state-building, in other words, the ability to engage with the multiplicity of conflict stakeholders that are relevant and necessary for the effective prevention of conflict. In complex environments, this would not be confined to relations and engagement with the state or state security actors. The skills and scope of activities relating to prevention would need to be much wider than the skills set required for engagement only with state security actors on national security priorities, such as border management, terrorism, piracy, cyber security etc.
5. **The necessary human rights expertise is available to CSDP missions and operations at headquarter level and in country.** This statement is drawn from the 2006 Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) Paper: Mainstreaming Human Rights across CFSP and other EU policies, endorsed by the Political and Security Committee. Human rights violations or abuses are often socially and politically influential factors for the risks and ongoing dynamics of a conflict. Access to expertise on human rights and the incorporation of non-elite, cross-sectional perceptions and analysis of human rights would have operational and political advantages, by providing civilian CSDP missions with essential operational risk assessment and monitoring capabilities and the necessary analysis to avoid inadvertently escalating or sustaining conflict. The second aspect is especially relevant where state security actors are implicated in human rights violations in the conflict dynamics.

6. **Mediation-related tasks are incorporated within CSDP.** This statement is drawn from the 2009 Council of the European Union Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities. In contrast to negotiation, and early efforts towards peace agreements, mediation places greater weight on process as well as outcome, to work on ongoing relationships between conflict actors. Process-driven engagements, such as mediation are more likely to map and need to take account of multiple stakeholders, levels and identifying their distinct potential contribution to prevention or sustainable peace. In short, recognising possible spoilers, allies, incentives, needs, capacities of non-state conflict stakeholders. In contrast, negotiation has tended to be limited to elite processes limited to those seen as having the formal authority to decide. This overlooks the importance of trust-building and the agency of non-elite, non-governmental stakeholders in sustainable prevention and peace efforts.

7. **All relevant EU players share a common understanding of the situation and challenge in a conflict / crisis context.** This statement is drawn from the 2013 Joint Communication on the EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises. It is relevant regardless of the approach or goal, but given the current dominance of a securitisation agenda, it would take a concerted effort to reverse this trend and promote a common interpretation of conflict prevention oriented toward sustainable peace. However, given the human factors that are at play, even achieving a single, common vision would in itself be a prerequisite for effectiveness as the alternative risks incoherence across the spectrum of EU actors involved in civilian CSDP.

8. **EU conflict risk analysis draws extensively upon field-based information from EU Delegations.** This statement is drawn from the 2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention. Given the multi-level, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder complexity of conflict dynamics, awareness and access to information and perspectives in-country is the foundation of robust analysis. As the main EU representatives in-country, EU Delegations would be an important source of information and/or access to information about a wider variety of conflict stakeholders, in order to shape mission planning, risk management and realistic design for preventive objectives.

9. **Gender awareness and sensitivity contribute to the situational awareness.** This statement is drawn from the 2006 Council Conclusions on promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in crisis management. As noted in the literature review, conflict dynamics and risks can arise in any social, cultural, political, economic or other domain, and risks of escalation or consequences of violence can also manifest in these domains. Analysis of gender relations in a conflict context may explain patterns of recruitment into armed groups, economic or political deprivation of certain regions or patterns of abuse by security actors. Therefore, awareness and attentiveness to these gender dynamics should be an essential component of situational awareness, preparedness and risk management for a civilian CSDP mission; even more so when the engagement is intended to be preventive as assumptions about outcomes or conflict risks cannot be planned without this.
10. **EU conflict risk analysis draws extensively upon field-based information from civil society actors.** This statement is drawn from the 2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention. Non-state actors, domestic and international civil society organisations are more likely to have access to local and cross-sectional knowledge and perspectives through relationships and trust built over the long term, which (as noted above) is crucial for generating a fuller picture of the many levels of dynamics and root causes shaping conflicts. This would be crucial to inform not just implementation and risk management, but also to assess the viability of mission mandates and conditions for success in terms of preventing conflict.
11. **Partners, local stakeholders and local populations provide feedback for mission evaluation / lessons learned processes.** This statement is drawn from the 2006 CIVCOM Recommendations for Enhancing Cooperation with NGOs and CSOs in the Framework of EU Civilian Crisis Management and Conflict Prevention. It relates to the question of whose security is targeted in a conflict prevention engagement and what success looks like. If EU actors are guided by conflict prevention logic – and not only focused on building the capacity of states – then the input and feedback from affected populations, local stakeholders and partner governments would be essential to assessing whether prevention efforts were effective. This goes beyond assessing whether the EU-designed civilian CSDP mandate was efficiently executed.

12. **Beyond a common understanding, there is a single, common EU vision for the conflict or crisis situation at strategic level.** This statement is drawn from the 2013 Joint Communication on the EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises. It is also relevant regardless of the approach or goal, however, as noted in the literature review, part of variation of interpretation around the term 'conflict prevention' comes from differing ideas of what security is, as well as how to achieve it. A common understanding is a prerequisite but, even with this, ideological differences can still influence what the ultimate goal of prevention should be. Thus, it is also useful to ascertain whether staff see a single, common EU vision at strategic level, i.e. clear criteria that shapes what successful preventive engagement looks like.
13. **The external impact of internal EU policies is taken into account.** This statement is drawn from the 2013 Joint Communication on the EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises. While considerable attention is placed on the internal impact of external dynamics, particularly in relation to terrorism and border control, less emphasis is visible for EU reflection on the external impact of internal policies, whether that be discourses in domestic politics or more concrete policies, such as the promotion of the European defence industry (European Union, 2016). Recognising the two-way nature of EU policies enables MS politicians and senior EU decision-makers to assess the viability of an EU-led engagement on prevention, in light of the EU's entry points, perceptions, leverage and credibility among conflict stakeholders in the proposed context. It also enables deployed mission staff to identify and manage the consequences of EU internal policies where they affect the execution of their tasks or relations in partner countries.
14. **CSDP training and advice to security forces is connected to EU action to promote human rights, democracy and good governance.** This statement is drawn from the 2013 Council Conclusions on CSDP. Conflict analysis almost inevitably reveals problematic dynamics in each of these areas, suggesting that civilian CSDP engagement – or cooperation with others – across all of these fields is necessary for effective conflict prevention, and to avoid conflict insensitivity. A limited analysis of conflict causes, drivers or stakeholders that overlooks these sectors risks inadvertent impact on conflict dynamics, or an inability to have a preventive effect. Thus, training and advice would need to be based on robust conflict analysis, including the risks and opportunities of working with certain stakeholders in order to genuinely prevent violence, or to avoid inadvertently supporting conflict dynamics.

15. **Gender mainstreaming is not treated as a goal in itself, but as a means of making missions more effective in establishing peace and security.** This statement is drawn from the 2005 Operational Paper on Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution, as agreed by the Politico-Military Group. The need to better account for gender dynamics, relations and the links with conflict dynamics is relevant for their operational effectiveness, especially when dealing with prevention and anticipating conflict risks. However, the mainstreaming of gender should not be limited to the assessment of the context, but also in terms of the civilian CSDP mission staff. The assumption that issues of gender only relate to the third country context creates a blind spot in terms of the EU's own reflection on what it is well-placed (or not) to contribute to in terms of prevention. For example, whether political decisions on civilian CSDP mandates have taken account of cross-sectional gender and security needs, whether the mission will be able to supply the necessary tools and expertise to assess how gender dynamics within missions can impact on the implementation of the mission mandate, or whether there is sufficient recognition among heads of mission and senior CSDP decision-makers of a variety of gender roles and agency within conflict contexts and how that will intersect with mission activities and objectives.

4.2 Survey Methodology

Non-probability purposive sampling method – in this case an expert sample acquired using chain-sampling – was chosen to access respondents that fit the profile of having direct experience and exposure to civilian CSDP missions, i.e. who were best-able to provide a valid opinion. The aim was not to collect a large sample of responses that could be extrapolated to the wider community of CSDP staff. Neither was it designed to derive patterns of response according to the different institutional associations of the 36 respondents. The value of the data was rooted in the ability to gather and compare individual opinions and experiences. Incorporating respondents with different institutional perspectives and experiences of civilian CSDP was necessary to do justice to the variety of profiles and institutional affiliations of EU actors involved in civilian CSDP missions.

The survey was conducted on the basis of confidentiality and to ensure this, the responsibility for dissemination was separated from the task of the analysis, and respondents themselves distributed the survey to additional participants from within their own networks. The survey was disseminated to:

- CSDP mission decision-makers (i.e. political strategy);
- EU policy-makers (i.e. mission design);
- operational staff (i.e. mission planning and coordination);
- mission staff (i.e. implementation);
- recruitment and training providers;
- civil society stakeholders (i.e. local NGOs in host countries, EU-based NGOs); and
- CSDP researchers.

Participants were asked to select the option that most described their perspective, choosing from:

- within a CSDP Mission
- within an EU Member State administration
- within an EU Institution
- as a CSDP / Mission Training provider
- within an EU-based NGO or think tank
- as an academic researcher in this field of study
- as a local expert or NGO where a civilian CSDP mission is / has been deployed

It was also divided into two main parts where participants were asked to rate their agreement on whether each statement represented an accurate description of the contemporary context of EU external action / of EU standard practice for civilian CSDP. They were subsequently asked their opinion on the importance of those same statements for civilian CSDP missions in terms of having a positive impact in the conflict context. This is described in parts A and B (below and overleaf, respectively).

A. sought their opinions on whether each statement represented an accurate description of the contemporary context of EU external action / of EU standard practice for civilian CSDP, answering:

- Yes
- No
- To some degree

B. sought their opinions on whether these factors were essential for civilian CSDP missions to have a positive impact on the conflict dynamics in the mission context. It was specified that the positive impact was not the achievement of mission objectives, but the broader positive impact of the mission on the dynamics of the conflict / crisis context in which the mission was deployed. Respondents had the option of selecting a number from 1-4, which represented a sliding scale of importance. The key for the numbers was as follows:

1. Essential
2. Important
3. Important to some degree
4. Not at all important

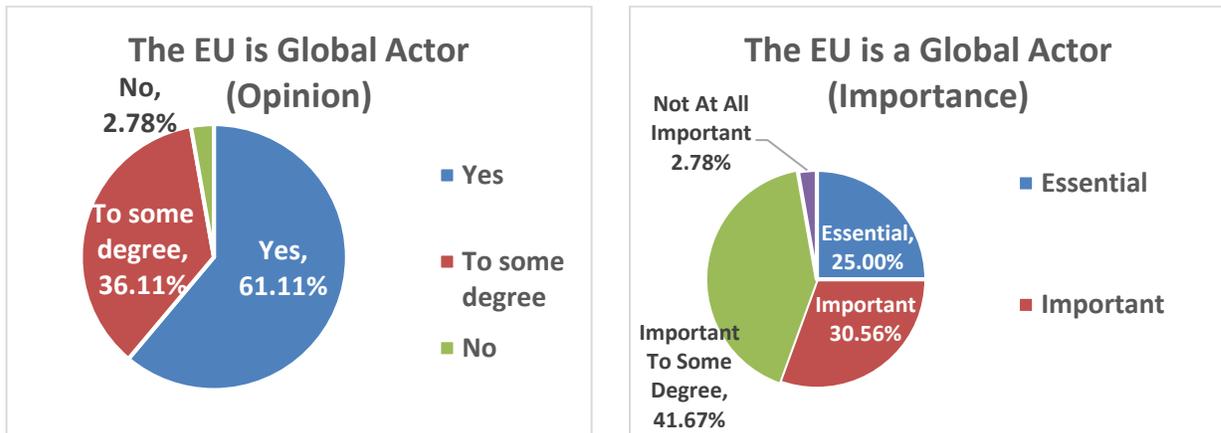
4.3 Limits and Caveats

An important caveat for the results arising from this survey method is that while the results represent the opinions of respondents, they cannot be considered as automatically reflective of their practice. It is quite possible that some, all or none of the respondents allowed their opinions to influence their practice in relation to missions. An additional caveat relates to the decision to use an expert sample of 36 respondents, representing experience from across EU actor types. This type of sample can provide more nuanced responses as they have specific and relevant knowledge based on their exposure to, and experience of, the topic being surveyed. This had the advantage of providing a rich range of responses, however, the disadvantage with the small sample size meant that there were only few respondents for each type of civilian CSDP stakeholder. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn about the differences between civilian CSDP institutional associations. Consequently, the results are limited to three types of observation: 1) describing the responses of the sample, 2) individual responses to indicators and 3) where certain cross-sections of responses were notable (e.g. respondents internal to the EU versus those outside the EU institutions or MS). The output of the survey, though limited, at least indicates that researchers cannot assume cohesion of opinion and interpretation among the wide range of CSDP stakeholders.

5. Results and Analysis

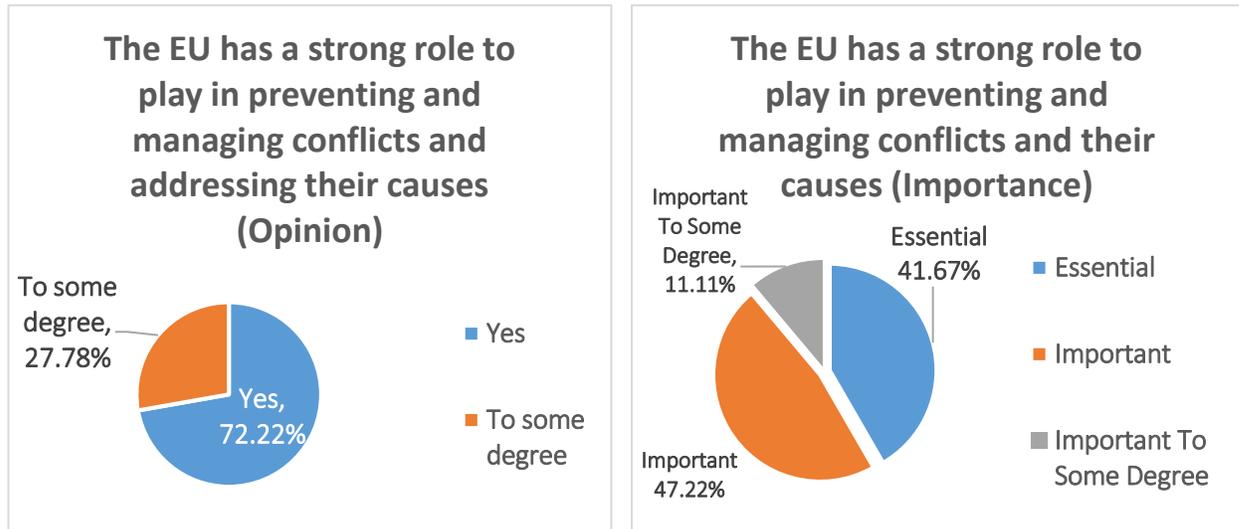
The main result was the confirmation that there was little to no consensus of opinions among those surveyed; and opinions were not aligned along the different institutional profiles of the respondents. Moreover, those surveyed did not concur, either in their assessment of the current reality of EU practice or in their assessment of which factors were important for a civilian CSDP mission to have a positive impact in a conflict context. As such, this finding endorses the idea that research and analysis of CSDP should be explored more according to psychological, cultural and sociological influences, and micro level factors in foreign policy. It seems apparent that, in addition to policy, guidance and structure, human factors can and will have an impact on the way that civilian CSDP engages with conflict prevention in practice. Moreover, this is not only relevant for high-level EU politicians and decision-makers, but at all hierarchical levels, including those tasked with translating mandates into concrete design, planning, and deployment. The results for each survey factor are presented below.

1. The EU is a global actor.



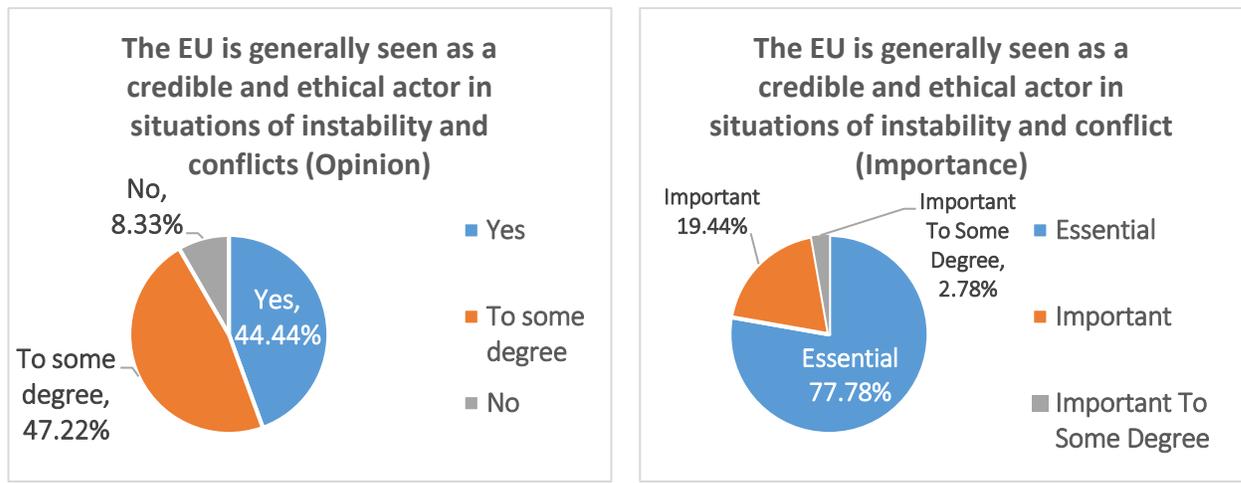
Sixty-one percent conclusively described the EU as a global actor while only 3% disagreed with this description, leaving over a third of respondents choosing not to answer yes or no, and feeling that they could only describe the EU as a global actor 'to some degree'. As noted earlier, being seen as a global actor could reduce perceptions that the EU engages strictly according to self- and geopolitical interests, which might increase the EU's possibilities of playing an active and positive role in conflict prevention as it is more likely to be perceived as credible and trustworthy by a wider variety of conflict actors. Among respondents, just over half saw this as essential or important in order for civilian CSDP missions to have a positive impact in a conflict context (56%). Nonetheless, 44% did not see the importance, or only to some degree. Interestingly, one respondent with experience of civilian CSDP missions did not perceive the EU as a global actor and did not view this factor as important for a civilian CSDP mission to have a positive impact in the conflict context (only 'important to some degree').

2. The EU has a strong role to play in preventing and managing conflicts, and addressing their causes.



The majority of those surveyed answered that the EU having a strong role to play in preventing conflict accurately represents the contemporary context of EU external action (72%). Moreover, none of the respondents disagreed with this statement, but 28% agreed only to some degree. At the same time, most also felt that this role for the EU was either important or essential for civilian CSDP missions to have a positive impact in the conflict context (42% answered essential and 47% answered important). None of those surveyed rejected the importance of this role for the EU, there were no ‘not at all important’ responses, but a small number saw it as only important to some degree (11%). Given the observations that EU engagement in conflict is increasingly securitised and guided by EU internal security and border control, these responses could be viewed either as an endorsement of more proactive intervention on behalf of EU interests, or as a recognition of the EU's potential as a global actor committed to promoting sustainable peace. Indeed, it may be both. Regardless, it does suggest that there is still a relatively strong commitment to an outward-looking role for the EU and continued engagement in preventing, managing and addressing the causes of conflict.

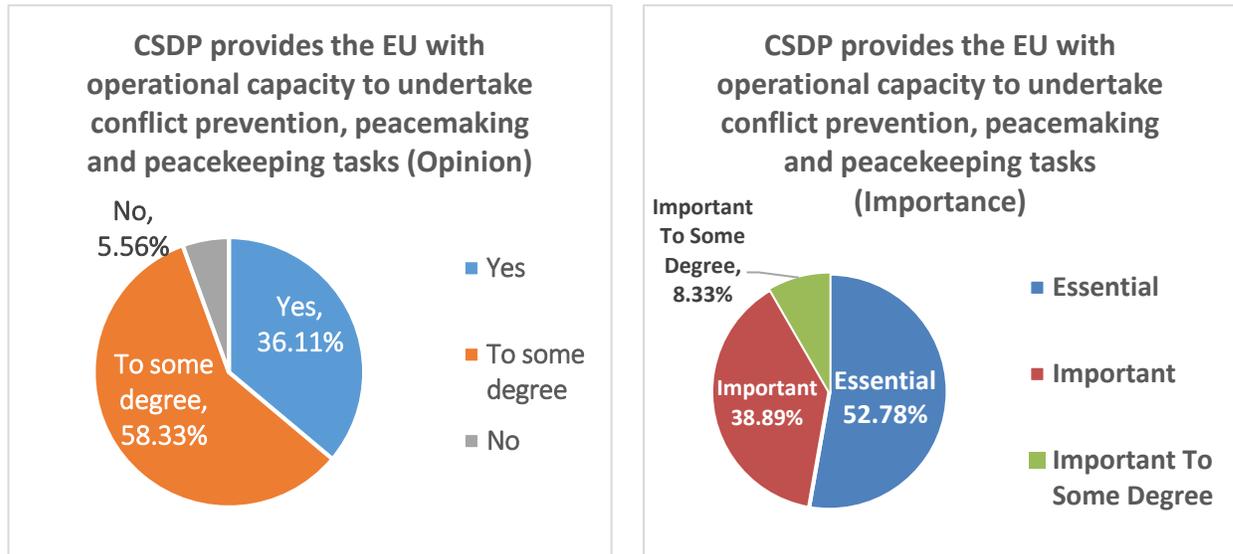
3. The EU is generally seen as a credible and ethical actor in situations of instability and conflict.



There was a sense that the EU is generally seen as a credible and ethical actor in situations of instability and conflict (44% said yes and 47% said to some degree). Only 8% of respondents disagreed. However, the percentage of those that responded ‘to some degree’ is much higher than in previous questions, which implies that there is less certainty about the EU’s credibility and normative power. It is worth noting that those outside of MS, missions and institutions disagreed; with negative opinions from a local expert / NGO, an academic and an EU-based NGO / think tank, which may represent an internal-external divide. One respondent coming from the perspective of an MS administration also saw the EU as having credibility and perceived ethics only ‘to some degree’, suggesting that even those with experience of CSDP political decisions have questioned whether the EU is generally seen as credible and ethical. In the narrative comments, one respondent said that “the EU may present itself as a disinterested party, but that is not how it is seen on the ground”,⁹ which would be problematic as the extent to which populations in third countries trust and are willing to cooperate with EU actors can and does influence the ability and effectiveness of the EU to engage in a conflict context. Nonetheless, an overwhelming number saw this characteristic as being either essential or important (78% answering essential, 19% answering important) and none outright rejected its importance, although 3% saw it only as important to some degree. As with the previous statements, this suggests that respondents see the need for the EU to be perceived as having broad global interests, credibility, ethics and a strong role in conflict prevention.

⁹ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

4. CSDP provides the EU with operational capacity to undertake conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping tasks.



A majority of respondents only tentatively agreed that CSDP provided the EU with operational capacity for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping, answering ‘to some degree’ (58%). Another 36% conclusively agreed that this represented an accurate picture of contemporary EU practice. Six percent disagreed. However, around 90% of those surveyed felt that these capacities would be important for having a positive impact (53% essential, 39% important) and no one thought it was ‘not at all important’. Two respondents felt that CSDP does not currently provide the EU with the operational capacity for conflict prevention, answering from outside of missions, institutions and MS. Both of these external respondents went on to rate this capacity as important in order for civilian CSDP missions to be able to achieve a positive impact in a conflict context, which suggests that they perceive a current gap or opportunity that has not been sufficiently taken up. It is also notable that, from an internal EU perspective (i.e. those with experience from an EU institutional perspective or those with experience within a civilian CSDP mission or an MS administration) respondents were also not unanimous, which implies that even within ‘the EU’ there are different views on whether CSDP as a tool represents an EU capacity for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping tasks. In the narrative section, two respondents expressed doubts about whether CSDP was able or appropriate for conflict prevention due to mission “size, scope of mandate and [because they are] politically hamstrung”¹⁰ and because prevention is “not the point of CSDP, but DEVCO”.¹¹ While another felt that, on the contrary, the EU should “get out from a crisis management / short-term logic”.¹²

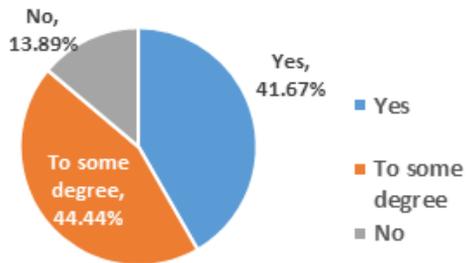
¹⁰ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

¹¹ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

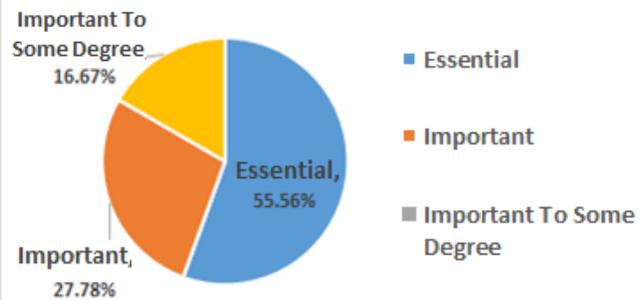
¹² Respondent no. 3 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

5. The necessary human rights expertise is available to CSDP missions and operations at headquarter level and in country.

The necessary human rights expertise is available to CSDP missions and operations at headquarters and in country
(Opinion)

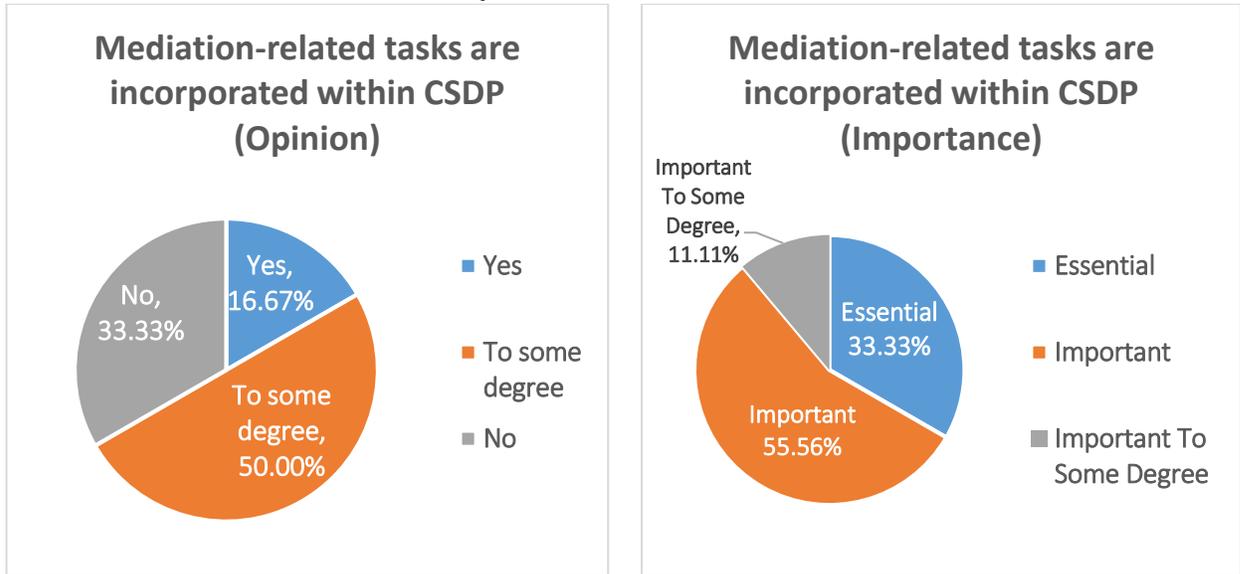


The necessary human rights expertise is available to CSDP missions and operations at headquarter level and in country
(Importance)



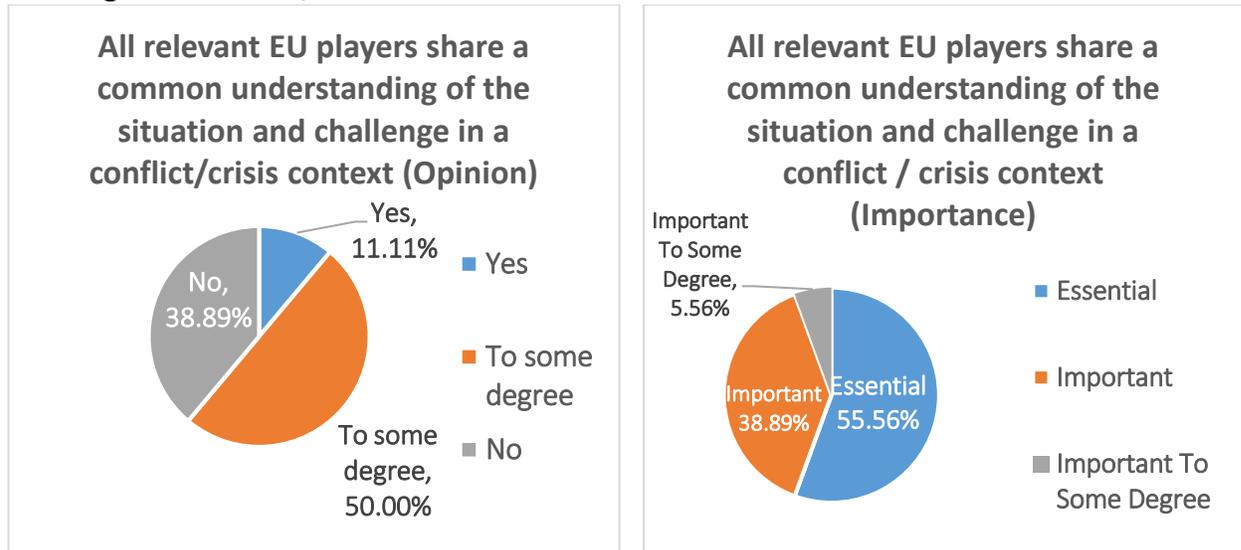
Most considered that the necessary human rights expertise was available to CSDP missions and operations: 42% answered that this was an accurate picture of contemporary reality, while 45% viewed it as available to some degree. Notably, it was mostly respondents exposed to CSDP from outside EU institutions, CSDP missions and MS who saw it as unavailable (14%). In terms of importance for impact on the conflict context, 56% rated it as essential and 28% as important while four respondents who had experience within civilian CSDP missions saw this only as ‘important to some degree’, meaning that there are at least some CSDP mission staff who do not recognise or see the significance of the link between human rights expertise and the ability of missions to achieve a positive impact in the conflict context. Given the likelihood that missions would be deployed in contexts where human rights violations and abuses have taken or are taking place, expertise on how to address and respond to these would be an important component of conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping capacities; especially where state security actors are implicated in the alleged abuses or violations.

6. Mediation-related tasks are incorporated within CSDP.



Along with human rights expertise, mediation-related tasks would also enable civilian CSDP missions to play a stronger role in prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping. As with many of the factors, there was no consensus on the current EU practice or situation. Half believed that mediation-related tasks were already incorporated, but only to some degree. A third believed that they were not, while 17% believed conclusively they were. Most of those with experience of civilian CSDP from working within an EU institution did not believe that mediation-related tasks were incorporated, which suggests that either there are different interpretations of what mediation tasks entail and / or different experiences across missions. Four respondents viewed the incorporation of mediation-related tasks as being only ‘important to some degree’, and three of those answered from EU institutional experience. Nearly all of those surveyed saw the incorporation of mediation-related tasks as either essential (33%) or important (56%), which corresponds to the support shown for human rights expertise.

7. All relevant EU players share a common understanding of the situation and challenge in a conflict / crisis context.



Respondents could not agree on whether all relevant EU players share a common understanding of the situation and challenge in a conflict crisis context in contemporary EU practice. Half confirmed that it happens, but only to some degree, 11% conclusively thought it did, while 40% not. Given the role of robust conflict analysis in supporting effective strategy and operational design, and the risks of incoherence in conflict-affected contexts, shortcomings are highly likely to influence the ability of civilian CSDP missions to be effective at prevention and to avoid inadvertent action that sustains or feeds the negative dynamics in a context. What is positive is that despite perceived gaps or weaknesses around coherence, almost all saw a common understanding as essential (55%) or important (39%). Analysis and knowledge of context was featured in many of the supplementary narratives, with eight respondents calling for: “comprehensive analysis”,¹³ “sufficient in-depth strategic analysis”,¹⁴ “situational awareness and media monitoring”,¹⁵ “a mission that is designed based on a solid conflict analysis”,¹⁶ “field driven political analysis”,¹⁷ “mak[ing] sure that before you send people into a mission that they know the situation in the country”,¹⁸ “training CSDP staff extensively on the history and socio-political context of the conflict”,¹⁹ “situational awareness”²⁰ and a “proper understanding of the conflict context”.²¹

¹³ Respondent no. 2 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

¹⁴ Respondent no. 6 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

¹⁵ Respondent no. 10 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

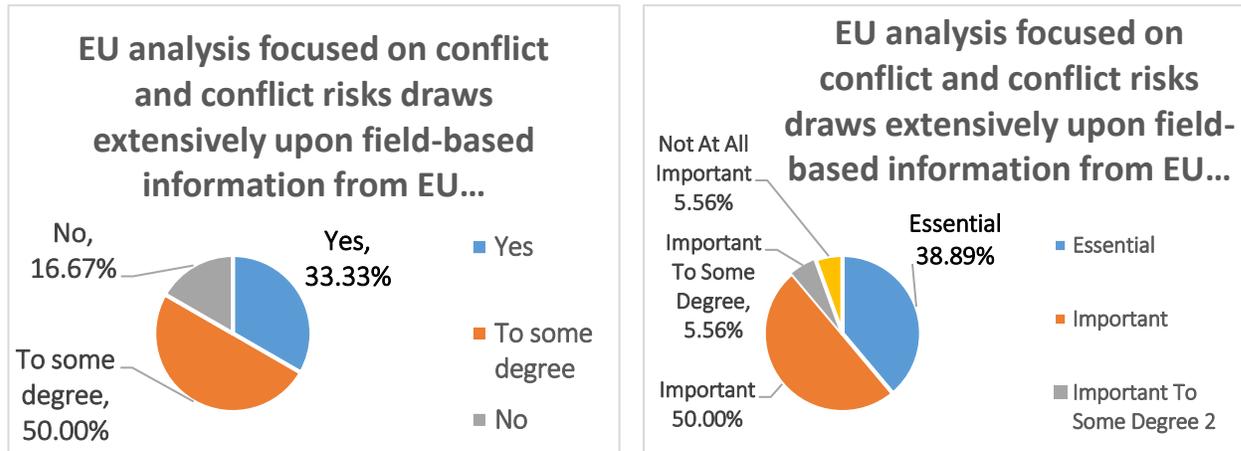
¹⁶ Respondent no. 12 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

¹⁷ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

¹⁸ Respondent no. 31 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

¹⁹ Respondent no. 27 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

8. EU conflict risk analysis draws extensively upon field-based information from EU Delegations.



Linked to the idea of pursuing a common understanding of the situation and challenge is the question of the content of conflict analysis. Half of the respondents described input from EU delegations to conflict analysis as happening only to some degree, while a third believed that this did take place and 17% thought not. Of those that did not believe that EU delegations' input was being used, three answered based on their experience within civilian CSDP missions. What is notable is that two of the respondents with experience within civilian CSDP missions saw EU delegation input to analysis as not at all important for a positive impact in the conflict context. This may reflect their personal views on the quality of analysis or it may imply a lack of value placed on input coming from those based in-country. Given the proximity of EU delegations to a variety of conflict stakeholders in-country, it is positive that 39% of those surveyed saw analysis drawing on input from delegations as essential and 50% as important. The issue of better linkages with the 'local' context was spontaneously highlighted by ten respondents who cited: "local ownership" four times, "sufficient buy-in from local authorities",²² the need "to work [...] with local activists",²³ "local expertise", "to investigate what needs local stakeholders have and how to achieve those",²⁴ "local buy-in",²⁵ the importance of "shap[ing] activities to local political realities"²⁶ and "proper outreach to host population/stakeholders"²⁷ as important for the success of a civilian CSDP mission designed to prevent conflict.

²⁰ Respondent no. 32 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

²¹ Respondent no. 36 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

²² Respondent no. 3 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

²³ Respondent no. 25 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

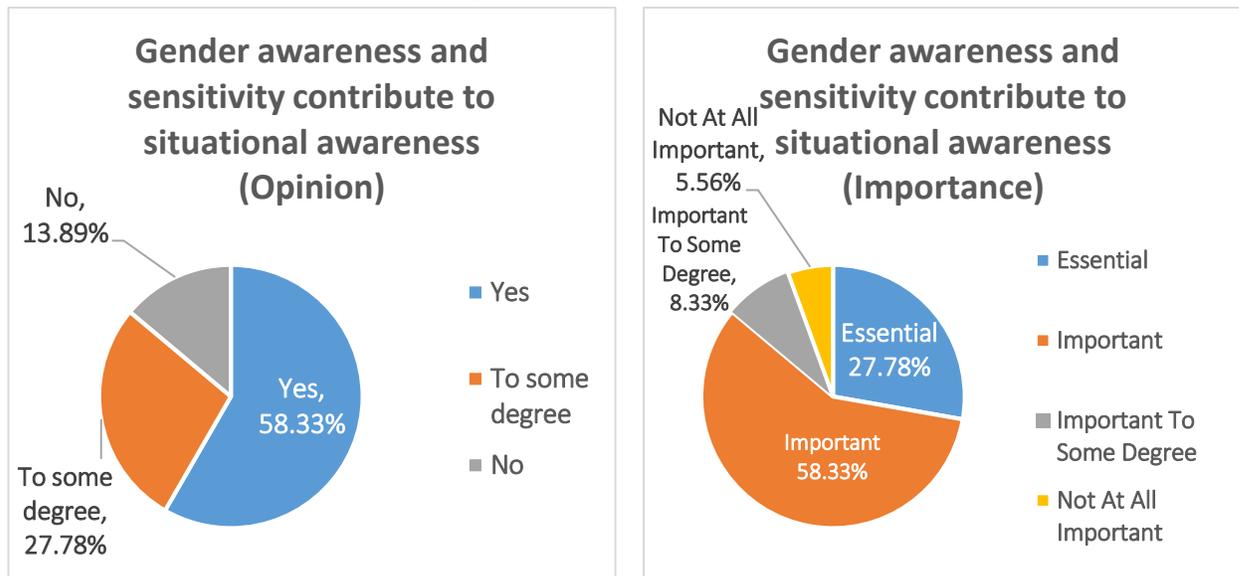
²⁴ Respondent no. 26 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

²⁵ Respondent no. 27 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

²⁶ Respondent no. 3 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

²⁷ Respondent no. 35 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

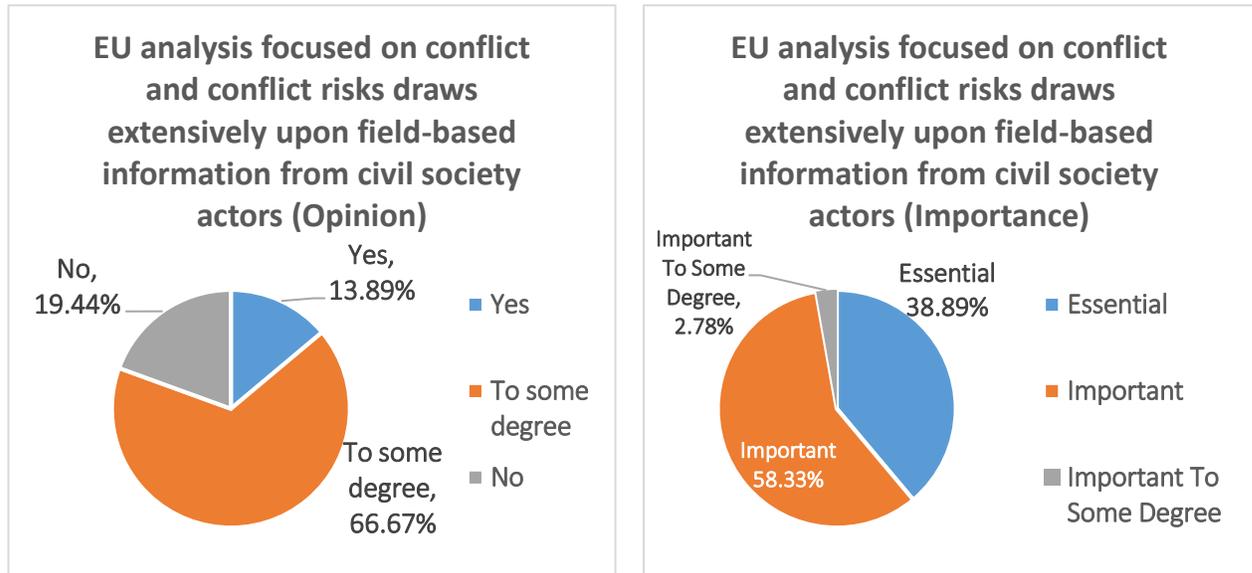
9. Gender awareness and sensitivity contribute to the situational awareness.



As with field-based information for conflict analysis, gender awareness and sensitivity relate to the breadth of the scope of EU conflict analysis. Most respondents considered that gender awareness did contribute to situational awareness. However, there is a methodological drawback with this statement as it is not clear how far this represents their opinions on whether this statement is factually accurate or their opinion on whether this is current EU standard practice. This makes it difficult to analyse the survey responses and so the focus will be on responses around the degree of importance. The overall result indicates agreement among respondents that gender awareness and sensitivity contribute to situational awareness and that this is beneficial for a positive conflict impact as 28% described it as essential and 58% as important. Six percent thought it only important to some degree and another 6% though it was not at all important. Nonetheless, essential or important responses were recorded across respondents with all categories of CSDP experience. What is still questionable, however, is how respondents interpreted gender awareness and sensitivity as other researchers have noted a tendency to confine discussions on gender to the comfort zone of gender balancing of missions, gender-based violence in conflict, and conflict-related sexual violence (Meger, cited in Deiana & McDonagh, 2017: 5-6). The capacity to incorporate analysis on patterns of recruitment, economic agency and marginalisation, challenges to gender roles can strengthen the ability to identify risks or make operational adjustments. In the narrative comments, one respondent cited the importance of integrating gender in political analysis from the field as important for prevention specifically.²⁸

²⁸ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

10. EU conflict risk analysis draws extensively upon field-based information from civil society actors.



As with EU delegation input and gender awareness and sensitivity, this relates to the content, i.e. robustness and depth of conflict analysis. There was a mixed picture among civilian CSDP stakeholders as to whether it is current EU practice for analysis to draw extensively on input from field-based civil society actors. Most chose not to conclusively describe this as current EU standard practice and so 66% answered “to some degree”. Fourteen percent of respondents believed it reflected the current reality of EU standard practice while 19% thought not. Of the 14% that described it as current standard EU practice, three spoke from experience within civilian CSDP missions. However, drawing on input from CSOs, in-country was overwhelmingly rated as essential or important, with 39% selecting ‘essential’ and 59% choosing ‘important’. Only 3% saw it as important only to some degree. In the narrative comment section, few specified analysis coming from civil society, instead referring to “field driven political analysis”²⁹ or “local expertise”,³⁰ but not necessarily from civil society actors. Another respondent mentioned the need “to work....with local activists”³¹ and “a participatory approach promoted with civil society”,³² but not limited to analysis.

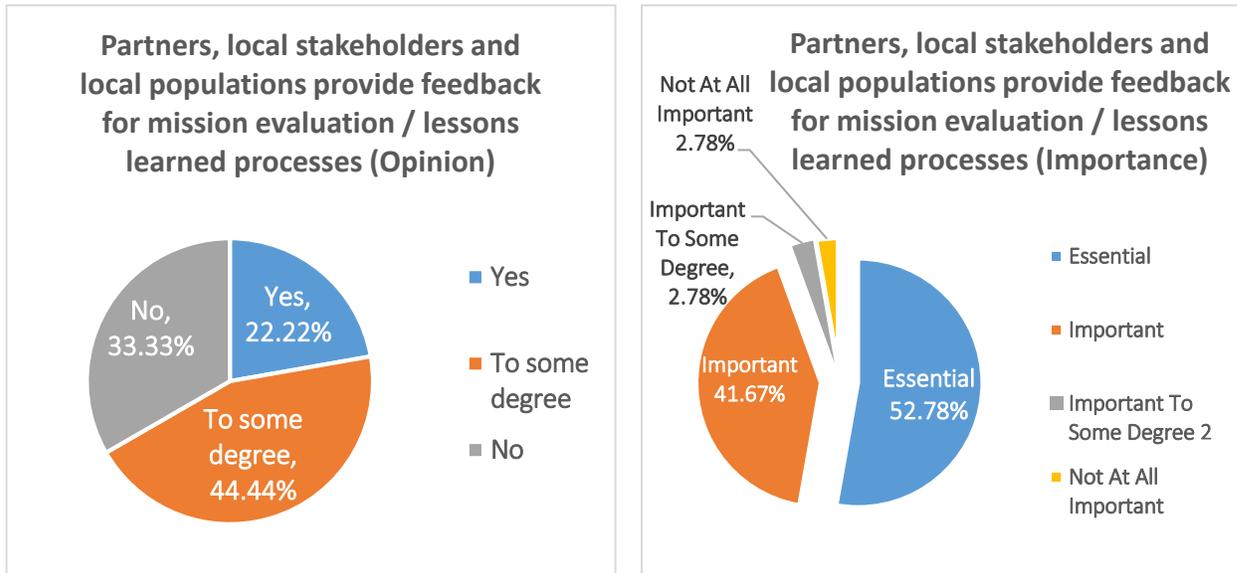
²⁹ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

³⁰ Respondent no. 26 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

³¹ Respondent no. 25 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

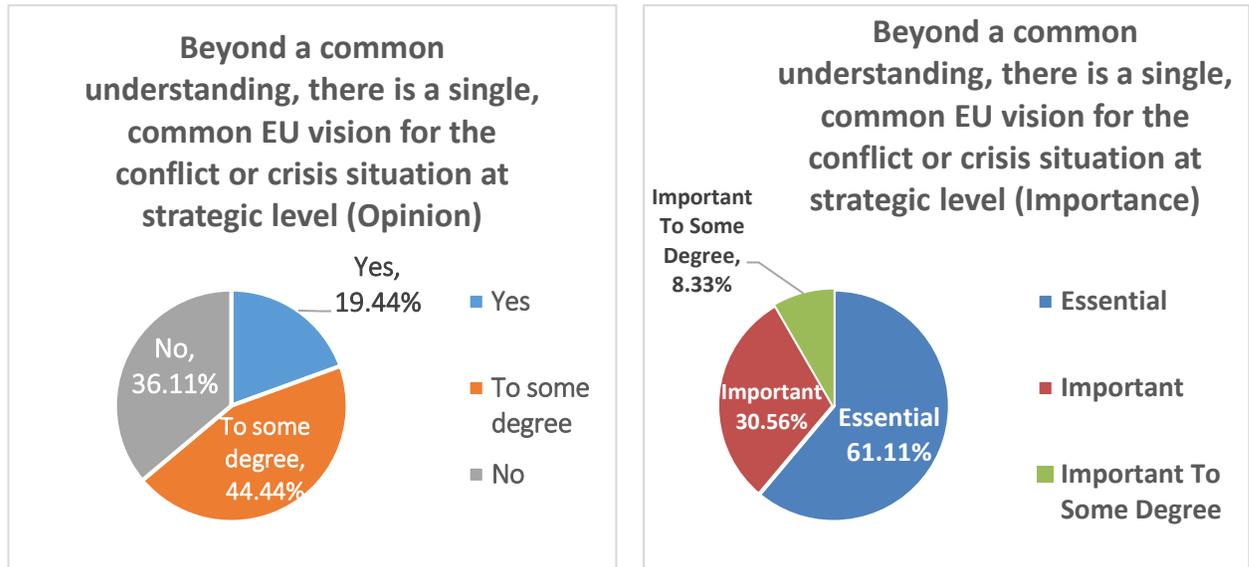
³² Respondent no. 10 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

11. Partners, local stakeholders and local populations provide feedback for mission evaluation / lessons learned processes.



The question of who defines success relates to the discussion of whose security, what security and what peace in the literature review. As with most of the surveyed factors, respondents did not concur on whether partners, local stakeholders and local populations provide feedback for lessons learned as current EU standard practice. Some 44% believed it happened to some degree, 22% thought that it did represent current EU standard practice and 33% thought not. This implies that either there are different ideas about including this feedback from local stakeholders and/or that practices vary across civilian CSDP missions. Either way, almost all respondents recognised the value of instituting such a practice, with 53% rating it as essential and 42% as important. Only two respondents answered that it was only 'important to some degree' or 'not at all important'. However, given the focus on individual influence on foreign policy, the fact that these opinions exist among CSDP stakeholders is still worthy of note in terms of EU cohesion in its commitment to this principle. The need to implement lessons learned was highlighted by one respondent as an important factor for success, but without mentioning the kind of input that should be incorporated into lesson-learning processes.

12. Beyond a common understanding, there is a single, common EU vision for the conflict or crisis situation at strategic level.



The vision relates to how the EU itself defines success and is linked to the previous question of who influences this vision of success. Most respondents did not answer conclusively on whether there is a single common EU vision at strategic level, perhaps reflecting a variety of experiences across different mission contexts. Forty-four percent thought that the contemporary situation reflected a common EU strategic vision for conflict and crisis contexts ‘to some degree’. Respondents from a range of experiences saw shortcomings, with 36% answering ‘no’. This included those with experience from the perspectives of MS administrations, from within civilian CSDP missions, within EU institutions, academia, local experts / NGOs and EU based NGOs / think tanks. Only 19% of those surveyed felt able to answer ‘yes’ conclusively. On the other hand, respondents overwhelmingly judged a single, common EU strategic vision for the conflict or crises to be essential (61%) or important (30%) in terms of civilian CSDP achieving a positive impact in a conflict context. None of those surveyed rejected the importance of a common strategic EU vision. Five of the narrative comments on important factors for successful prevention referenced the need for more cohesive strategy, mentioning: the need for missions to be “designed as an integral part of a political strategy”,³³ “to secure political agreement among the Member States more quickly and easily”,³⁴ “more unified views between EU members”,³⁵ “consensus among the MS”³⁶ and for “MS to present a more unambiguous opinion”.³⁷

³³ Respondent no. 12 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

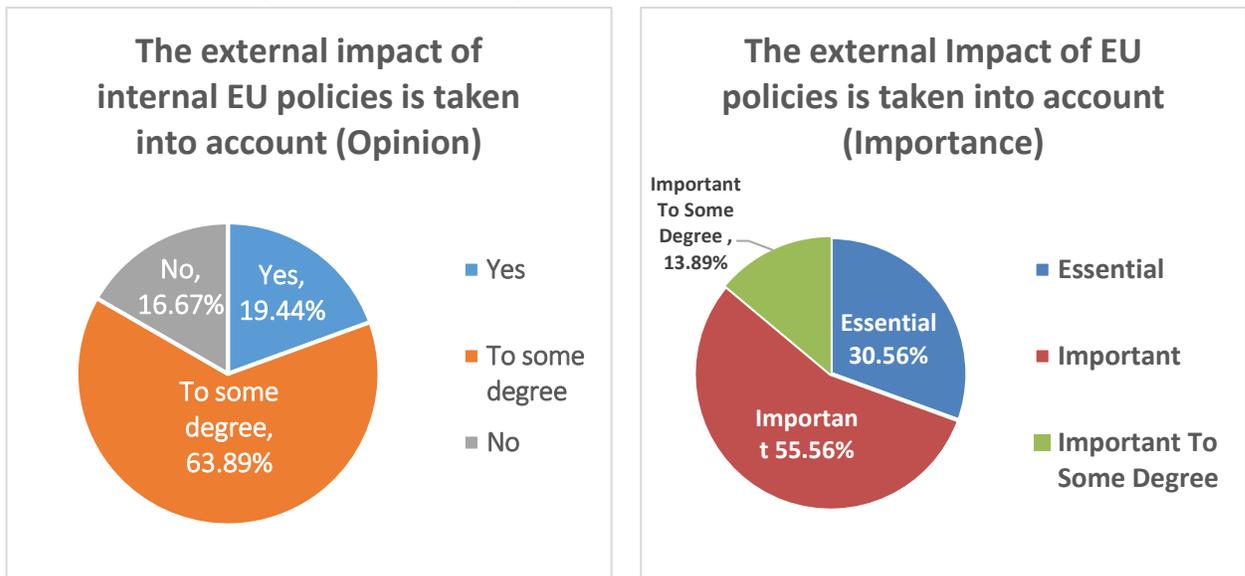
³⁴ Respondent no. 7 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP (*Author’s translation*).

³⁵ Respondent no. 22 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

³⁶ Respondent no. 32 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

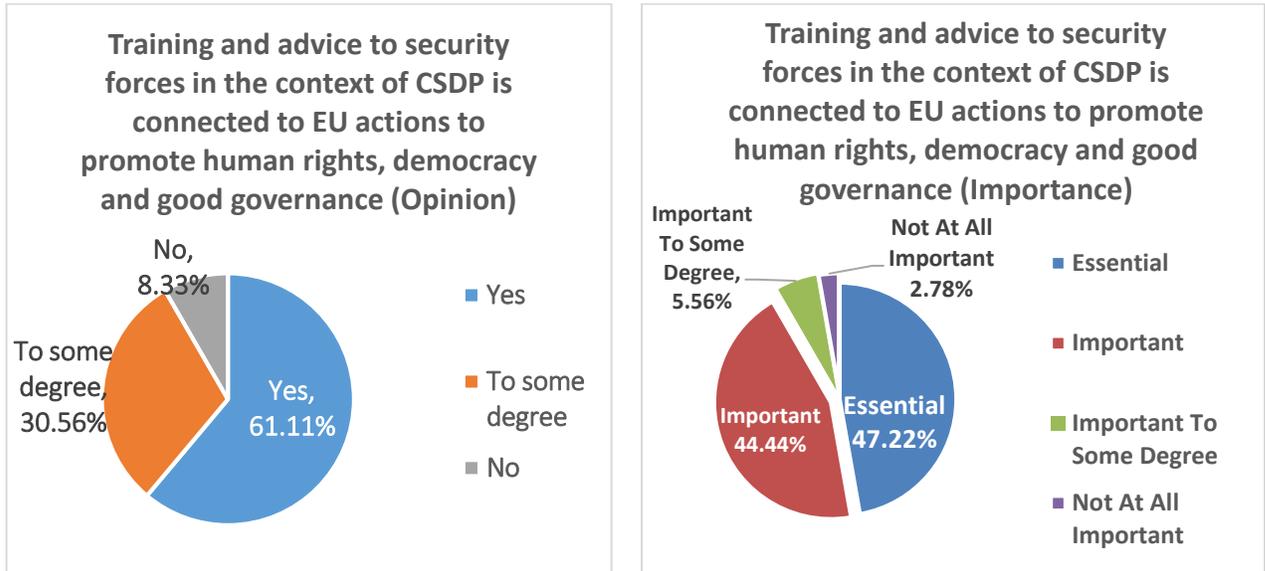
³⁷ Respondent no. 33 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

13. The external impact of internal EU policies is taken into account.



Sixty-four percent answered that the external impact of internal EU policies is taken into account to some degree in the contemporary situation. Nineteen percent conclusively believed this to be the case, while 17% did not. Even those with experience of civilian CSDP from the perspective of EU institutions were not aligned with a variety of yes, no and “to some degree” responses based on their experiences. In terms of importance for having a positive impact, 85% rated it in the top two categories of importance (30% essential, 55% important). There were those who viewed it as only “important to some degree” and interestingly this response came from a variety of stakeholder types including perspectives from experience within EU institutions, a CSDP training provider, local expert / NGO and as staff within a civilian CSDP mission. None of the respondents mentioned the potential external impact of internal EU policies in their narrative comments. It would be interesting to follow up on these responses as it suggests that the respondents saw more potential for EU internal policy-making to support a positive impact in external conflict contexts. This contrasts with the trend described earlier where the EU’s internal domestic interests on borders and internal security were thought to dominate EU discourse.

14. CSDP training and advice to security forces is connected to EU action to promote human rights, democracy and good governance.



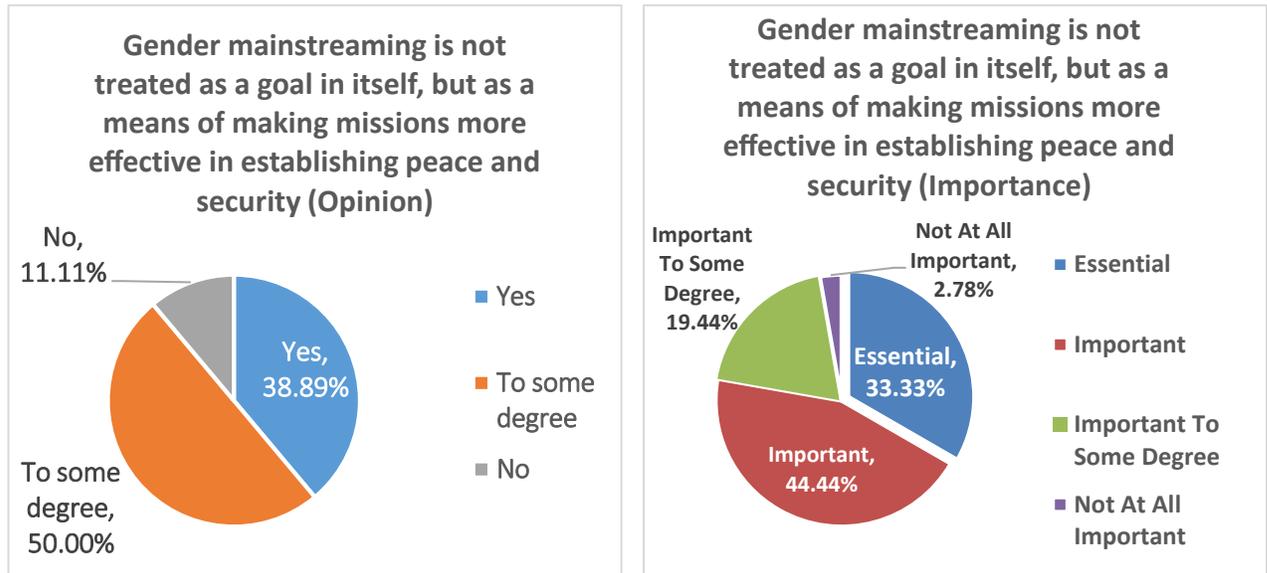
This relates back to the interlinkages between human rights and conflict, along with conflict dynamics relating to democracy and governance issues. Most of those surveyed felt strongly that the EU did link training and advice to security forces to EU action to promote human rights democracy and good governance (61%). Only 8% did not agree that this is current EU standard practice and of the three that disagreed, two gave their views based on experience of civilians CSDP outside of MS administrations, EU institutions or missions. Thirty-one percent saw the connection to some degree. In terms of importance, almost all saw it as being essential (47%) or important (44%) to make this connection in order for missions to have a positive impact. There was one respondent with experience within a CSDP mission who felt that making these connections was only important to some degree in terms of achieving a positive impact.³⁸ In the narrative comments, there were two allusions to issues of democracy and good governance; the first mentioning “government commitment to reforms, oversight and parliamentary control and principles of the UN Charter [being] respected”,³⁹ and second, the link between safety, stability and “democratic police”.⁴⁰ The question that is raised is how civilian CSDP missions concerned with prevention would construct theories of change that explain how advice and training would transform practice in contexts where state security forces play a problematic role in the conflict dynamics.

³⁸ Respondent no. 34 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

³⁹ Respondent no. 10 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

⁴⁰ Respondent no. 14 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

15. Gender mainstreaming is not treated as a goal in itself, but as a means of making missions more effective in establishing peace and security.



This builds on the point on gender awareness and sensitivity contributing to situational awareness. Current EU standard practice on gender mainstreaming was reviewed quite positively by those surveyed. Almost 40% considered mainstreaming as a way to improve effectiveness. However this view was not unanimous as half answered ‘to some degree’. A small number (11%) – all with experience of CSDP missions outside the EU, i.e. not from MS administrations, EU institutions or CSDP missions – disagreed that this represented the reality. This suggests that either EU practice is not visible to others or that the interpretation of gender mainstreaming may well differ between those inside and outside of the EU. In terms of the importance of its contribution to a positive impact in the conflict context, most answered that they viewed it as essential or important (33% essential, 44% important), while 22% rated it as important to some degree or not at all important. In terms of the potential for a stronger civilian CSDP prevention role, the point is not that gender mainstreaming happens, but rather how it is considered and used to inform the targeting, design, and implementation of preventive missions. One respondent highlighted the issue that no CSDP is well-balanced in terms of “gender, race, civilian/military background.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Respondent no. 24 in the CSDP Respondent Opinion Survey – EU CIVCAP.

6. Conclusions

At the outset of the research, the goal was to explore whether ‘human’ factors are a valid consideration with regard to the capabilities of civilian CSDP in preventing conflict and thereby contributing to sustainable peace. The survey method contributed to this by examining heterogeneity among a small sample of CSDP actors. In doing this, the divergence of interpretations and opinions toward conflict prevention and civilian CSDP was confirmed. The survey showed that, not only are there varied opinions on what is important for conflict prevention, but also different interpretations on the reality and current practice of EU external action. Moreover, the responses did not fit neatly into categories according to the institutional perspective and experience of civilian CSDP, which implies that it is not possible to assume that the attitudes of stakeholders are determined only by institutional allegiance, headquarters vs. field-experience, or the type of EU actor. This also shows that, regardless of the EU policies and guidance that have referenced good practices or principles for conflict prevention, attitudes vary. Whilst the sample is small, it is nonetheless worthwhile for civilian CSDP mission decision-makers (political strategy), policy-makers (mission design) and service providers (e.g. recruitment / training / evaluation) to reflect on the operational consequences of this divergence.

Many respondents noted obstacles relating to a lack of MS cohesion and poor coordination between different EU CFSP and external action tools in the narrative comments, which is in line with many prevailing research recommendations around capacities, resources and intergovernmental relations. Yet, many recommendations with regard to policy, guidelines and other formal apparatus presuppose that if rectified, these technical and political blockages would be followed by uniform implementation and commitment. Whether differences of opinion are linked to individual bias, national diplomatic culture, military and civilian culture or bureaucratic culture, the recommendations for addressing or overcoming a lack of cohesion cannot be solved by looking only at resources or Member State bargaining. To survive a daunting number of cultural, institutional, psychological and sociological filters, missions must pay attention to the ‘how’ as much as the ‘what’. In other words, how will policies, action plans, concepts, strategies and guidelines move from theory into practice? What resources are being devoted to helping individuals and departments understand how the reform / innovation should affect their tasks? What will create the incentive or obligations for staff / experts to adopt this as their standard practice? What would help to foster common understandings and preferences around conflict prevention across and within the staff working on civilian CSDP?

The richness of the data from the survey is a strong indicator that there is value in applying this type of method for EU foreign policy analysis more often. The responses from the expert survey clearly showed a level of variation that challenges any conception of EU actors at operational level as automatons. Conflict prevention appears to be particularly prone to diverse interpretations within the EU as politics and shifting priorities have pushed the interpretation of prevention in different directions. The diversity of individual expertise, experiences, preferences and biases that influence the practice of civilian CSDP is too often overlooked by research and policy alike, but this omission has also meant the omission of recommendations to address this reality. In response, the following section presents some recommendations and policy considerations focused on addressing heterogeneity of opinion on conflict prevention within the context of civilian CSDP.

Considerations and policy recommendations

1. To achieve added value for prevention and to avoid blind spots, EU conflict analysis that feeds into civilian CSDP missions should cover a broad scope of dynamics, stakeholders and root causes and examine a range of sectors, including input from non-elite and local level perspectives.

Conflict analysis was judged to be an important factor for the success of potential civilian CSDP prevention engagement. Robust conflict analysis – that at least covers gender dynamics, human rights, democracy, governance issues – is also likely to illustrate limitations or risks in engaging only top-down or state security actors. The tendency for political reporting or other types of risk assessment carried out in headquarters and capitals is to focus on government actors, security actors, and regional powers, overlooking the influence and agency of less visible, non-elite, non-state stakeholders.⁴² The methodology for political frameworks for crisis approaches (PFCA) would be an obvious existing institutional vehicle to push forward this type of analysis in support of prevention though, to date PFCAs are mostly commissioned in the midst of crises with little time for thorough analysis. To some extent, this can also be implemented in the context of in-mission training, which is also aimed at “deepening the knowledge...on the specific situation in the host country” (EEAS, 2017: 12). Despite the fact that this point concerns the *what* of doing conflict analysis, it does nonetheless, stipulate *how* to view conflict analysis to avoid blind spots or missing emerging risks in a preventive context.

⁴² This includes analysis limited to development or humanitarian perspectives that often emphasise vulnerability and marginalisation, whilst overlooking political agency within conflict dynamics.

2. The definition of objectives and the planning for civilian CSDP missions should be explicit about exactly which dynamic and risk of violence is being targeted by the mission activities, how different conflict stakeholders will position themselves in relation to the mission, and involve a critical reflection on how and why will the mission activities be successful in overcoming the obstacles of the context in order to transform that dynamic or risk.

This goes beyond describing general objectives, mission activities or assumptions linked to state-building. Again, PFCAs would be an obvious tool to facilitate this, but the same issues of late and time-pressured commissioning applies. Taking time for this would enable all civilian CSDP staff – from decision-makers to mission staff – to spot and avoid executing the mandate in ways that might inadvertently sustain or exacerbate negative conflict dynamics. Answering these questions could additionally help to elaborate the elusive single vision of prevention that the EU is trying to achieve in the conflict/crisis context, as supported by almost all respondents in the survey. Moreover, a focus on early prevention offers more space for this; time to consider how best to effect the desired change in the mission context and what that would mean for the roles and specific actions necessary in the mission.⁴³ Often, this type of reflection is limited to high-level decision-makers, or only at the moment of design of the mandate. However, this reflection is valid for all levels of CSDP staff as it might, to some degree, reduce the scope for individual civilian CSDP staff to act based on their own interpretation of prevention in the context of the mission. Overall, this type of joint strategising, which does not need to equate with joint decision-making, is likely to strengthen cohesion of purpose.

3. To enhance the translation of prevention into operational guidance, civilian CSDP operational plans (OPLANs) should connect key points from the conflict analysis specifically with the roles and tasks foreseen for a civilian CSDP prevention engagement.

Dissemination of analysis among the relevant EU stakeholders involved in decision-making, planning, implementation, deployment and evaluation of a civilian CSDP mission is important. However, it is not sufficient to overcome existing biases, beliefs or interpretations of what is important for prevention. Separately perusing an analysis document can only do so much to promote cohesion and the analysis alone may not resonate in the same way across individual staff. To create the incentive for individuals

⁴³ Merlingen (2013) goes into depth on the issue of roles and actions in his toolkit on evaluation of design and implementation of CSDP mandates.

to shift, this also has to mean mechanisms for enforcement and compliance by Heads of Missions. The more closely this is tailored to the design, operations and roles, and performance evaluation mechanisms within each specific mission, the less room is left for divergence of interpretation. Standard job descriptions are a good place to start to provide some form of template for the most common tasks and responsibilities for civilian CSDP roles. Relating tasks to conflict dynamics is an investment that could enhance individual awareness of the prevention and conflict-sensitivity implications in the everyday tasks of a mission. For example, by unpacking the implications of specific conflict dynamics on: relationships with counterparts or other stakeholders; perceptions of the EU and the mission, or how gender dynamics might manifest in the course of certain tasks.

4. In order to address biases and differing interpretations, EU conflict analysis should use participatory analysis methods as standard practice to promote more cohesive understanding (rather than just imparting knowledge) across the relevant civilian CSDP staff.

Commissioning or reading a conflict analysis report is not enough to overcome individual biases, ingrained beliefs or to create greater cohesion of purpose among EU civilian CSDP staff. Recognising this weakness, most contemporary conflict analysis is not focused on an output or a document, but on the process of getting to a joint analysis.⁴⁴ Participatory approaches have even proved effective in terms of enhanced solidarity (Tardy, 2015). The analysis should not reflect the perspective of one analyst, or a negotiation of language among different EU actors. Joint workshops to develop analysis create the space to discuss assumptions and where they merge and diverge. This exchange may be a way to promote a better understanding of one's own and of others' perspectives or biases. The EU-funded People's Peacemaking Perspectives project highlighted the importance of the process of conflict analysis in their end-of-project lessons report, as well as providing detailed insights into the methods and challenges of participatory approaches (Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, 2012). The greater the representation of different backgrounds – such as professional background, expertise, national, institutional, gender identity – the greater the likelihood that an easy-to-miss conflict dynamic or dimension of risk for the mission is identified. The EU Staff Handbook on Operating in Situations of Conflict confirms that analysis is most useful and robust when conducted in a participatory manner (European Commission, 2015a: 35) and this is the approach already enshrined in the EU Guidance Note on Conflict Analysis (EEAS and European Commission, 2013). In fact, the Guidance Note

⁴⁴ This is even more relevant in the context of prevention where there is likely to be even more ambiguity about the conflict risks.

recommends including input from external experts, such as civil society, which, as noted increases the chance that more marginal racial, religious, socio-economic, and non-elite dimensions of the conflict context are not overlooked in a conflict analysis. However, EU conflict analysis workshops are not conducted as standard practice in every conflict-affected context. They do not include all the civilian CSDP staff engaged in the planning and execution of a mission and at most, contribute to a PFCA only where the analysis is pre-existing.

5. In order to address biases and differing interpretations, EU conflict prevention actors should use training methods and tools that emphasise exchange and cooperation, which creates the opportunity to bring individual ‘human factors’ out into the open; drawing on rather than downplaying the different backgrounds and profiles among trainees.

The point on fostering cohesion also applies to all steps and formations of civilian CSDP staff. As with conflict analysis, the transfer of knowledge or expertise is not the only purpose of training. The recently published CSDP Training Policy highlights the role of induction training in facilitating common understanding of CSDP, the missions and the mission contexts (Council of the European Union, 2017). Awareness of all the intersections of gender, peace and conflict is just one area where eliciting various mission experiences, operational lessons and priorities could be a mutually illuminating process that would result in greater cohesion of purpose, at least on this aspect. Fostering this type of shared cognitive and cultural value should be recognised as an equal, rather than a supplementary objective. This has implications for the use of face-to-face and group training methods versus online or distance-learning, especially as cost factors push training providers towards fewer face-to-face options.

As noted in the beginning, civilian CSDP is ultimately driven by individuals and groups of individuals from across different EU actors and structures, and these can and should be analysed. Given the variety of perspectives the EU has espoused over the years, it is not surprising that a spectrum of interpretations of conflict prevention can be found among staff involved in civilian CSDP. The assumption that MS – or any other EU institution or body – are unified, cohesive actors is limited and creates a policy context that overlooks the need to address the psychological, social and cultural ‘human’ factors at operational level. The fact that this will likely determine how different civilian CSDP actors approach conflict prevention in their work, cannot be ignored. On the contrary, it calls for much greater attention from policymakers and academics on how this manifests itself and what can be done to harness a diversity of human experiences to promote effective and coherent approaches to conflict prevention within civilian CSDP missions.

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