European Union
EXTERNAL ACTION

F A C T S H E E T

EU Conflict Early Warning System

INTRODUCTION

The **2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention** building on the **Treaty of Lisbon (Article 21c)** have provided the strongest mandate yet for the EU to engage in conflict prevention.

A shift in emphasis away from reacting to crises towards conflict prevention **preserves lives and livelihoods** that might otherwise be destroyed when violent conflict erupts. As well as the severe **human costs of violent conflict**, the World Bank 2011 World Development Report showed that civil wars destroy decades of gross domestic product (GDP) growth on average and it takes countries years to get back on to a sustainable growth path.

> **"The costs of not preventing war are enormous**. The human costs of war include not only the visible and immediate – death, injury, destruction, displacement – but also the distant and indirect repercussions for families, communities, local and national institutions and economies, and neighbouring countries."
>
> Kofi A. Annan. Prevention of Armed Conflict. Report of the Secretary General. February 2002. United Nations

In order to prevent the emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violent conflict, **early warning is indispensable**. It is about systematically providing the right information to the right people at the right time – connecting the dots across relevant actors in the field and at headquarters.

It encompasses the **systematic collection and analysis of information** coming from a variety of sources in order to identify and understand the risks for violent conflict in a country and to develop **strategic responses** to mitigate those risks.

> The EU Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) is a tool for EU decision-makers to **manage risk** factors and **prioritise resources** accordingly.

EU APPROACH TO EARLY WARNING FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION

The goal is not 'prediction'. It will always be difficult to pinpoint the exact trigger for the eruption of violence in the future. What we do know is that there are certain factors and indicators that frequently correlate with violent conflict. If we can identify these and assess the **structural, underlying risks**

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for violent conflict in a country, we can more easily pursue early preventive actions before situations escalate into crises. This is **upstream conflict prevention** in essence. Moreover, country risk assessments enable decision-makers to take decisions on prevention (and crisis response) based on evidence and a deeper understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of violence in countries and regions. The resulting system has been designed to operationalise this approach using a methodology and analysis tools tailored to the EU institutional context and the needs of EU decision-makers.

> **The EU Conflict Early Warning System** enables staff across the EU to **identify and communicate** where they see long-term risks for violent conflict and/or deterioration in a country or region and to **stimulate early preventive actions** to address those risks.

WHY DEVELOP AN EU CONFLICT EARLY WARNING SYSTEM?

The EWS seeks to **address the warning-response gap** that is often observed. Therefore, the emphasis of the EU's EWS has been firmly placed on operationalising analysis for more effective preventive responses.

The EWS...

…puts early, upstream conflict prevention on **the EU political agenda**

…facilitates **risk management** for EU engagement in conflict-affected countries

…strengthens overall **EU coherence** on conflict prevention actions

…provides an **evidence-base** for EU-wide external action in 'at risk' countries

…stimulates **creative thinking** on potential EU preventive actions

…contributes to **strategic planning & programming** across the EU

…promotes relations between EU staff working in and on the same countries

HOW DOES IT WORK?

> **A Comprehensive Approach**
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> The EWS methodology exemplifies the **EU Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises** (2013).
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> It involves the EU External Action Service, the European Commission, Member States and civil society organisations; including those **in-country and in headquarters**.

It focuses on the **highest global conflict risks, ongoing highly violent situations** on a 4-year time horizon; **communicates** the risks or peacebuilding opporunties, and generates **comprehensive options** for **EU-wide actions,** which are **monitored** as part of the system's bi-annual cycle.

The methodology was designed for the **complex context of EU external action**, which comprises a number of institutions and services. Moreover, it builds on and reinforces existing EU tools, for example, the InfoRM index for humanitarian and disaster risk supported by DG ECHO, which enhances synergies between the two models.[1]

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[1] This collaboration enables mutually beneficial effects as InfoRM will integrate Global Conflict Risk Index (GCRI) results whilst GCRI was able to build on InfoRM's methodology development process. This collaboration thus further strengthens the evidence-base for preventive actions by the EU.

The development of the EWS has engaged academics, analysts, civil society organisations, as well as country and conflict experts from Member States and from across the world. This collaboration has generated **innovations** such as increasing the focus on changes over time, and trend directions, rather than purely static risk. The result is a system that **builds on existing knowledge and good practice** in the early warning community.

EWS PROCESS

Step One scans for high risk and deteriorating situations globally combining a **quantitative index** developed by the European Commission Joint Research Centre and **qualitative input** from an EU staff review and expert country analysis.

Step Two identifies 'at risk' countries that **require further EU analysis and action** for prevention or to capitalise on peacebuilding opportunities, through inter-service meetings of decision-makers as well as input from Member States.

Step Three consists of **analysis** *(see also separate Factsheet on Conflict Analysis)* that aims to combine input from EU staff in the field and headquarters. This step includes setting **explicit objectives** in preparation for early **preventive or peacebuilding actions**.

Step Four **monitors the resulting actions** in terms of their impact on the identified conflict risks or peacebuilding opportunities and feeds into the next cycle of assessment and analysis.

Fig. 1 Visualisation of the four steps of the EU Conflict Early Warning System

MILESTONES

Fig. 2 Milestones in the development of the EU Conflict Early Warning System

The EWS also directly **responds to the European Parliament's calls** for the EU to **move away from predominantly reactive responses** to crises towards earlier conflict prevention and to **present a sound basis for decision-making** on complex conflict situations.

FEEDBACK

"We find this very useful as we do not have the capacity to develop an early warning mechanism ourselves"
- EU Member State

"As a result of the early warning system pilot, two countries were added to the regional strategy"
- EEAS, Regional Division

"This can be a very useful contribution to more strategic thinking, policy planning and formulation of new ideas inside the EU"
- Senior EEAS decision-maker

"It brings different mindsets and approaches together. You get a debate. You broaden the horizon for everyone which I think is very important.""
- EU Special Representative

"We've never had such a good discussion on the risks of conflict in our country before. It really helped us to get a joined-up view"
- EU Delegation

"The analysis and recommendations arising from the pilot process were useful for our programming exercise"
- Commission Official

ADDED VALUE FOR EU EXTERNAL ACTION

The EWS is designed to **close the gap between early warning and early action** by engaging EU staff in a shared assessment and analysis process that is tied to follow-up action.

It **supports evidence-based decision-making** on resource allocation and other prevention and peacebuilding tools for staff working in and on countries at risk of violent conflict.

It has been **pilot-tested in two regions** so far. As a result, diplomatic initiatives as well as thematic projects and conflict analysis have been carried out in these countries according to the identified risks. The EWS is being rolled-out on a global scale.

COMPLEMENTARY EU-FUNDED EARLY WARNING ACTIVITIES: CIVIL SOCIETY

Through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the EU is supporting early warning capabilities of civil society actors around the world.

"Strengthening Early Warning and Mobilizing Early Action" – International Crisis Group in partnership with the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office

This project aims to **strengthen the links** between early warning, conflict analysis and early response with a view to contributing to better conflict analysis and early warning combined with creative but practical recommendations and a more **coherent** and **systematic** use of information.

"Capacities for Peace" – Saferworld in partnership with Conciliation Resources

This project aims to enhance **in-country actors' capacity** and opportunity to engage effectively in the whole "chain" of early warning. In particular, by strengthening in-country actors' skills in **conflict analysis** and the development of **response strategies**; nurturing collaborative relationships among in-country actors engaged in early warning; promoting the generation and use of early warning information by in-country actors; and by disseminating **lessons learned** on early warning capacity and processes.

Find out more: Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Instruments Division, EU External Action Service: k2@eeas.europa.eu

REFERENCES

2001 Commission Communication on Conflict Prevention

2001 Presidency Conclusions: EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (Göteborg Programme)

2002 Presidency Conclusions of the Seville European Council: Implementation of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts

2003 European Security Strategy

2007 Commission Communication: Towards an EU response to Situations of Fragility: Engaging in difficult environments for sustainable development, stability and peace

2007 Council Conclusions on Security and Development

2007 Council Conclusions on an EU response to Situations of Fragility

2009 The Treaty of Lisbon (Article 21c)

2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention

2011 Council Conclusions on Common Security and Defence Policy

2013 Council Conclusions on Common Security and Defence Policy

2013 Communication on the Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises

2014 Council Conclusions on the EU's Comprehensive Approach

OVERVIEW: OTHER SYSTEMS

Since 2007, the EU has cooperated with regional partners on the development of crisis response and early warning as part of EU external action. For example, in 2007, cooperation began with the African Union to enhance the Continental Early-Warning System based in Addis Ababa, followed in 2010 by cooperation with the League of the Arab States (LAS) on developing a Regional Crisis Response Centre in Cairo, which was inaugurated by High Representative / Vice President Catherine Ashton in November 2012.

Support has also been provided to the Organisation of American States (OAS), ASEAN, and will soon be extended to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). These activities have been financed under the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

African Union (AU)

The Continental Early Warning System of the AU is designed to advise the Peace and Security Council on potential conflicts and threats to peace and security in Africa. It consists of an observation and monitoring centre, also called "the Situation Room" as well as Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution units.
(http://www.peaceau.org/en/page/28-continental-early-warning-system-cews)

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

In July 2010, SADC launched its Regional Early Warning Centre. The centre is designed to strengthen the SADC mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution. It does so by compiling strategic assessment and analysis of data collected at regional level, sharing information on threats to security and stability of the region and proposes ways to deal with such threats. It is expected to link with National Early Warning Centres in all SADC member states and the Continental Early Warning Centre at the African Union.
(http://www.sadc.int/sadc-secretariat/services-centres/regional-early-warning-centre/)

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

In the framework of its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS established its own Early Warning System. It consists of the Observation and Monitoring Centre at the Commission as well as four Zonal Bureaus located in member states. Based on open-source information, the system is responsible for

observing and monitoring sub-regional peace and security indicators, providing timely reports with recommendations to the Office of the President.
(http://www.comm.ecowas.int/dept/stand.php?id=h_h2_brief&)

European Commission and Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task team for Preparadness and Resliliance Index for Risk Management – InfoRM

InfoRM presents the first global, objective and transparent tool for understanding the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters. The Index identifies countries that are in very high, high, medium and low levels of risk to emergencies and disasters and explains the underlying factors causing this risk, based on three dimensions: Hazard and Exposure; Vulnerability; and Lack of Coping Capacity. It is a collaboration of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team for Preparedness and Resilience and the European Commission led by ECHO and JRC, but developed in a wide partnership, including OCHA, DFID, WFP, WHO, FAO, UNICEF, UNISDR, World Bank and others. The index provides a common data set that can be used as a wider support tool across the disaster management field for disaster risk reduction and resilience, as well as for emergency response actions, civil protection activities and potentially for other areas such as development and climate adaptation. The soft launch of the project took place in January, and the official release is planned for November 2014 (http://inform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/).

Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The Early Warning mechanism of the OSCE is built into the Conflict Prevention Centre, created in 1990 to help reduce the risk of conflict. It collects and analyses information from different sources and offers advice to the Secretary General and the Chairmanship on possible responses to emerging crises.
(http://www.osce.org/secretariat/107485)

League of Arab States (LAS)

The headquarters of the LAS in Cairo is equipped with a crisis room, which extends training to Arab diplomats from the General Secretariat of the LAS as well as those from member states. The crisis room is also intended to contribute to a foreseen pan-Arab Early Warning System.
(http://lasportal.org/wps/wcm/connect/62fb54804d6d38338bf29f4eaeef6d81/EU-LAS+Cooperation.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)