Crisis management and Response

A guiding principle of Lisbon Treaty provisions, which lie at the heart of the very purpose of the EEAS, is the desire to achieve a substantial increase in ‘responsiveness’ to the opportunities and challenges that exist beyond EU borders. Adequate EU action during external emergencies, which require ad-hoc decision making, is no exemption to this.

Crisis response implies the immediate mobilisation of EU resources to deal with the consequences of external crises caused by man-made and natural disasters.

Crisis Response System

The EEAS Crisis Response & Operational Coordination Department is responsible for the activation of the EEAS Crisis Response System (Crisis Platform, EU Situation Room, Crisis Management Board), and therefore plays a central role in ensuring both swift and effective mobilisation of actors and instruments across the EU system as well as coherence of policies and actions throughout the various phases of the crisis life cycle.

The EEAS Crisis Response System (CRS) covers crises which may affect EU security and interests occurring outside the EU, including those affecting the EU delegations or any other EU asset or person in a third country. It equally covers crisis occurring inside the EU if those have an external dimension. CRS ranges from prevention and preparedness to response and recovery aiming to achieve a comprehensive EU crisis response and management capability.

The CRS contributes to ensure coherence between various aspects of crisis response and management measures, in particular in the security, political, diplomatic, consular, humanitarian, developmental, space related, environmental and corporate fields. The secretariat of the CRS is ensured by the EEAS Crisis Response Department, which plays a key coordinating role that facilitates translating the comprehensive approach into comprehensive action in crisis response and management.

The EEAS Crisis Response Department comprises the following three Divisions:

1. **Crisis Response Planning and Operations** is tasked with the overall planning, organisation and coordination of crisis related activities, including preparedness, monitoring and response. In particular, the Division has the responsibility:
   - to assist the EU High Representative in her responsibility to ensure the coherence and
coordination of the EU's external action specifically in the field of crisis management and response;
- to undertake specific missions in crisis areas
- to coordinate the work of the EU Crisis Platform
- to closely follow developments in the world in order to enable the EEAS to respond to potential and emerging crises at short notice

2. The EU Situation Room is the EU's crises centre that provides worldwide monitoring and current situation awareness 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round.

3. Consular Crisis Management assists in consular policies across the EU and coordinates actions in times of crisis.

Crisis Platform

EU crisis response & management instruments are subject to different institutional and decision-making processes within and beyond the EEAS. In order to ensure that responses to emergencies are both timely and adequate, effective coordination of the relevant crisis management instruments (civilian and military) is a key priority during all phases of the crisis cycle. The Crisis Platform – which comprises a range of services across the EU system and is chaired by the High Representative, the EEAS Executive General (ESG) or the EEAS Managing Director for Crisis Response – can be convened on an ad hoc basis and is a crucial mechanism that is activated to guarantee EU responsiveness during external crises. The Platform provides the EEAS and Commission services with a clear political and/or strategic guidance for the management of a given crisis.

Depending on the characteristics of a particular crisis, the EEAS Crisis Platform can bring together:

- various EEAS crisis response/management structures: Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD), Crisis Response Department, EU Military Staff (EUMS), Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), Situation Centre (SitCen), EU Situation Room as well as relevant geographical and horizontal EEAS Departments,
- the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and
- the relevant European Commission services (ECHO, DEVCO, FPI, etc.).

The secretariat support is ensured by the EEAS Crisis Response Department which performs an overall operational coordination function in support of the ESG, on the basis of conclusions agreed at the Crisis Platform meetings.

The unexpected onset of the 'Arab Spring' in early 2011 and its aftermath put the then recently established EEAS (at the new EU foreign policy system more generally) to its first major test. In that regard, the EEAS Crisis Platform played an important role, and has since become an institutionalised element of crisis decision-making within the EU-system.

Crisis Response Cycle

Emerging and acute crises require swift responses, not only to alleviate human suffering, to avoid or prevent further escalation and instead strive to promote dialogue, reconciliation and reconstruction, and to protect EU citizens. Unlike in other areas of foreign policy, the capacity of the EU to meet the needs and challenges that (often unexpectedly) arise in natural and man-made emergencies crucially depends on its ability to take, in real time, ad hoc decisions and actions. In short, when crises erupt –
though they seldom follow a predictable pattern – immediate attention and coordination is required. Response is thus complementary to medium- to long term measures and integral part of a comprehensive approach that includes conflict prevention and peace building, CSDP missions or development programmes.

The EU Situation Room

The EU Situation Room is the first point of contact for all information on crisis situations. It is a permanent stand-by body that serves as a situation information hub for all relevant stakeholders from the European institutions. It acts as the EEAS switchboard and embeds within situation reports or flash reports all crisis related information provided, among others, by EU Delegations, EU Member States, EU CSDP Operations and Missions, EUSR teams, and International Organisations.

More specifically, the EU Situation Room:

- Monitors and reports on worldwide events on a 24/7 basis, focusing on topics and issues relevant for the EEAS and the EU as a whole;
- Liaises 24/7 with CSDP Missions and Operations through a Watchkeeping Capability, as well as with EU Delegations;
- Supports HRVP and relevant EEAS services, the Council, and cooperates closely with the Commission;
- Plays a role in the EU Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements (IPCR) to support political coordination and decision-making in major, complex, inter-disciplinary crisis;
- Manages and develops relations with national crisis response and crisis coordination centres of EU Member States;
- Has regular contacts with other regional and international organizations' crisis centres, such as the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO), League of Arab States (LAS), African Union (AU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Consular Crisis Management

Part of the EEAS Crisis Response Department, the Consular Crisis Management Division currently has two roles:

1. assisting the Presidency to coordinate consular policies across the EU (e.g. travel advice, issuance of consular guidelines);
2. to assist the Presidency and/or Lead States to coordinate action in times of crises.

For normal consular work, Member States do not need the assistance of the EU. Consular assistance and protection are after all an exclusive national responsibility. However, not all EU citizens are represented in all third countries. As a matter of fact, the EU Member States are all present in only three countries: the US, Russia and China. This means that in all other third countries, one or more Member States are not present. Article 23 of the TFEU gives the right to any unrepresented EU citizen to obtain assistance from another Member State's consular services under the same conditions that the Member State providing the assistance would give its own citizens.
See also

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)
Conflict Prevention, Peace building and Mediation

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